



# **modernity** *of South Asia*

HI BANTHIYA



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## PREFACE

Cognitive construction and intellectual analysis of South Asia as a region have assumed significance both contextually and globally. Although great deal of work has been done in different areas thematically, theoretical dimensions of South Asian studies have not received adequate attention.

In the process of my academic socialization in South Asian Studies, two 'cognitive gaps' intellectually often made me uneasy: (i) There is dearth of studies in cultural, historical, economic and social aspects of South Asia, which could help in holistic construct of the region. (ii) Another gap is related to the lack of theoretical orientations in regional studies. I was encouraged by my teachers to explore the area of 'theory'. The risk was intellectually worth taking.

The present work is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for undertaking research and other studies on South Asia. The first chapter deals with issues and framework in the context of politics of knowledge. The second chapter deals with conceptual formulation of South Asia as a region. The third chapter focuses on the colonial cognitizing of South

Asia and need for academic liberation both from colonial and imperial cognitive formation. The fourth chapter deals with meta-theoretical approaches: positivism, idealism and realism. The fifth chapter deals with structural and system perspective while the sixth discusses the processual and comparative perspectives. The seventh chapter analyses the world system theory and postmodernity while the eighth chapter deals with feminist theory. The last chapter attempts to construct a theoretical paradigm for the South Asian studies.

This study provides a theoretical framework and has given such illustrative material related to South Asia region, which fits into the framework. The holistic perspective takes into account the postmodernistic thrust of the significance of theory and integral perspective to view reality. The work epitomizes major trends in social sciences and is critique of colonial-imperialistic cognitive orientation in the construction of South Asia.

Thus, the present work is essentially on theory and it is exploratory in nature. It attempts to epitomize the theoretical approaches in social sciences for understanding, analysis and construction of reality. Normally one ought to venture in the realm of 'theory' after having acquired certain level of intellectual maturity. But my enthusiasm overtook the maturity. My mental uneasiness motivated me to discuss the issues of theory with my father, Prof. Narendra K. Singhi of the Department of Sociology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. I borrowed his books, went through his manuscript on sociological theory, and used extensively the ideas and texts of many scholars in this area.

It has borrowed heavily from others. But I have tried to give a framework, some scattered ideas, some raw thinking and have presented at times unexpanded thoughts.

If the work serves as a pointer, a guide, a viewpoint and

motivates young scholar to treat theory as an essential part of any cognitive work, I would be happy.

It is difficult to relate biographical context to cognitive enterprise, specially when it is self-reflective. After having done B.A. (Hons.) in political science from Miranda College, Delhi University and M.Sc. in International Relations from University of West Indies, Trinidad, I joined the South Asian Studies Centre at the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

I owe my understanding of South Asia to the faculty members of the Centre who not only initiated me in the subject but also made me aware of the immense possibilities of searching new areas and new perspectives. To them, I offer my sincere thanks.

In selection of the theme, I owe my intellectual debt specially to Prof. Ramakant and Dr. Mohan Lal who encouraged me to work on the present theme. My father, Prof. N.K. Singhi, has helped me immensely in areas related to theory. In fact, the theoretical portions of the present work have been written jointly by me and my father. I express my sincere gratitude to all of them.

I convey my sincere thanks to the library staff and other administrative staff of the Centre, who have been thoughtful and kind to me in many different ways. That has helped me in pursuing my studies in the Centre with a sense of identification and oneness.

**RUCHI BANTHIYA**



## EDITOR'S NOTE

*From Historicity to Postmodernity* is basically a theoretical cognitive exposition, encompassing diverse trends, approaches and orientations in social sciences.

The nature of social reality is extremely complex; is structured, yet tends to be continuously in flux; and has empirical-observable dimensions despite motivational-intentional subjectivity of human actions. Its connectedness reveals past-present-future nexus. The individual and group actions are influenced by both who are directly interacting as well as those who are not present. Social scientists cannot ignore contextual dimensions, although science focuses on generality. The textual and oral both become relevant in understanding and interpretation of phenomena.

This cognitive pluralism poses several dilemmas to the researchers. These dilemmas have been referred as:

- (1) Naturalism versus anti-naturalism
- (2) Reductionism versus anti-reductionism
- (3) Cognitivism versus activism

- (4) Naturalism versus axiologism
- (5) Passivism versus autonomism
- (6) Collectivism versus individualism
- (7) Micro versus macro
- (8) Historicity versus contemporaneity
- (9) Modernity versus postmodernity
- (10) Grand versus ethnotheory
- (11) Feminist versus patriarchy
- (12) Functional versus conflict

The naturalistic traditions emphasize adoption of positivistic paradigm—mechanistic model of the physical sciences and the organismic model of the biological sciences. The nature of social reality has been considered to be subjectivistic by others. The synthetic model perceives nature of social reality as dualistic—it consists of *facts* and *meanings*. Interpretive understanding and external observation are two aspects of comprehension.

In reductionism, all propositions are reduced to propositions about individuals or uniqueness of events. Anti-reductionism believes that interactional combinations lead to formation of super individual entities.

Cognitivism focuses on interpretation and understanding of truth about society. The activist tradition believes in changing society—transformation, reconstruction and transcreation through use of knowledge for purposeful action.

Naturalism focuses on detachment. The questions of objectivity and value-freeness are related to the dilemma of naturalism versus axiologism.

This dilemma also brings in the question of insiders and outsiders. Can one have monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge or is excluded from it by virtue of group membership or social position. Actual membership in a group is clearly no guarantee of scientific perspective. Again, it could be

that *intentional* membership wherein the subjective identification of the scholars with the group is more important than the *actual* membership. The doctrine of insiderism, if pushed to the limit, has quite dangerous implications. A new variety of social methodology is proclaimed. There are as many closed group worlds as there are groups in human society.

The dilemma of passivism versus autonomism refers to the treating of men as totally autonomous subjects initiating, regulating and controlling their activities towards goals they have selected. Man is seen as an active subject rather than a product, an agent rather than a pawn, an actor rather than a reacting puppet. This is autonomism. Contrary to this, where man is seen as a product of society, a cultural case, a structurally induced person—is passivism. Social forces impinge upon him, independent of his individual will.

For structuralists, man is socially moulded, and for symbolic interactionism man is a conscious master of circumstances. There are several entities of a super-individual or inter-individual sort, which are part of collectivistic traditions. The proponents of singularistic-atomistic theories do not see the forest for the trees. Their attention is given to individuals, much less to the society. On the other hand, the questions raised are: Do the social wholes really exist? Do they constitute a separate ontological category?

Macro analysis deals with a specific level or unit or area of analysis in terms of theme or scope of coverage or dimensionality. Macro analysis is broad, in a sense total and whole. Historically, takes into account the processuality of past to present. The present is examined in relation to cumulative movement of past. The contemporary deals with present and neglects the past.

Modernity focuses on rationality, socialism, individualism and segmental-specialization. Postmodernity

emphasizes feelings, collectivity, holism and co-operation.

The ethnotheory deals with understanding, interpretation and construction of social reality through local, indigenous, contextual conceptual categories and theoretical formulations.

Feminist theories are critique of male-bias which enter in cognitive enterprise. These also present a perspective to view society from the feminist perspective.

Functionalism relies on consequences of activities which integrate and tend to develop a consensual-integrative model, while conflict approaches view society through dialectical processes with focus on conflict, struggle, oppression, and inequality, mainly through class analysis.

These dilemmas are inter-connected as well as overlapping. It is possible to present several combinations of the above schema.

Social sciences, in certain sense, are in a state of crisis in respect of theory and the symptoms of this can be seen in great deal of masochistic tendencies of self-criticism.

Despite lip service to inter-disciplinary perspective, scholars tend to cling to their boundaries. The academic structure and professionalization of disciplines further strengthens the tendency. Obviously colonialism, academic imperialism and politics of knowledge have played a dominant role in the formation of knowledge in India. Learning from our own intellectual traditions is necessary. This does not imply that western knowledge has to be decried. Knowledge, presupposes unity at certain level of exposition and abstraction. Political boundaries in cognitive spheres are anti-academic. The notion of unity of knowledge is the pre-requisite for any epistemic cognition. Intellectual differences and diverse mode of analysis should emerge not just for the sake of polemics or as intellectual arrogance but as an honest mode of

understanding and quest for knowledge.

Finality in the realm of knowledge is not possible at least not mentally. The search for truth is a continuous process and it reveals itself to most scholars in parts or partially. But there is a joy of seeking truth.

The work by Ruchi Banthiya attempts to articulate several issues related to theory and its relevance in understanding society. South Asia has emerged as a point of illustration rather than deeper analysis. In this sense it is an attempt to provide an overview of different theoretical perspectives. This work should be useful for students of sociology, political science, anthropology, South Asia studies, women's studies and related branches of knowledge.

I have tried to help the author in organizing her ideas systematically and also their formulation and presentation at places. The author has used my writings and those of other scholars extensively. At places, the ideas could have been elaborated and expanded. But all writings are incomplete and can be refined further. So is this work.

Rawat Publications has undertaken the academically significant task of starting a series on 'Indian Sociological Studies.' As a General Editor of the series, I am extremely thankful to them for having conceived this idea. I have found Rawat Publications, the friends of authors and readers, confident that they would create new ethos and value system in author-publisher relationship based on professional integrity and mutuality of co-operation.

## Chapter I

# **SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE: ISSUES AND FRAMEWORK**

Political interests tend to centre around power game. There are subtle, institutional, overt and covert mechanisms to convert political interests into cognitive-knowledge framework. The politics of knowledge has several dimensions and ramifications. The end purpose is to seek, create and use knowledge for manipulative political purposes. Obviously the ab-extra extrinsic basis of construction of such a knowledge by design is determined at the micro-level scheming by political interests of the nations of centre. The political nucleus of power has to find out legitimate means for institutionalized generation of knowledge, which could be used appropriately in the game for power and hegemony. Democratic states need such a facade and hypocritically strive to maintain their image and pronounced pious commitments.

Thus, use of knowledge necessitates creation of nomenclature of study as well as its institutionalization through formal academic format. Creation of South Asian

Studies as a distinct branch of cognitive enterprise, in the west, has its roots in imperialistic design for understanding the erstwhile colonies in South Asia. While anthropology served the colonial powers in their political operations, South Asian Studies were purported to serve the imperial nations of centre.

The politics of knowledge, thus clearly is envisaged as a branch of knowledge, which is similar to the basic assumptions of sociology of knowledge. The connection between the mental and extra-mental thought and society is traceable not only in the higher reaches of creative art, but also in the higher reaches of philosophical speculations.<sup>1</sup> Sociology of knowledge seeks to analyze the relationship between knowledge and existence.<sup>2</sup> In other words, it attempts to understand relationship between social forces and generation of ideas. When such a relationship is located in the wider generality of society in a diffused manner, the existential basis of knowledge is categorized as macro-sociology of knowledge. However, when knowledge is related and located in a specific sector of society, it is termed as micro-sociology of knowledge. In both the cases, the relationship between knowledge and society is spontaneous and not manipulated. When knowledge is manipulated for power and politics through variety of formalized or non-formalized means and methods it can be termed as politics of knowledge. The politics of knowledge is different from politics in knowledge. In the former case knowledge is manipulated while in the later, the focus is on power dynamics within the arena of knowledge-qua-knowledge. The former is an important vehicle of state for manipulation at the global or regional level externally or within the state internally.

The politics of knowledge aims at using knowledge as an instrumentality of power for political purposes in the realm of

state-state, state-states and intra-state relationships. The significance of such knowledge increases due to globalization of polity, communicational universalization and legitimization of academics as a trans-national phenomenon. The construction of knowledge as a free intellectual enterprise determined by logic, facts and reflection attempting to understand reality and truth, is replaced by construction of knowledge with defined and pre-determined results, so that desired reality could be projected and built as planned.

The instrumentalities used are part of western academic structure and culture. Centres, chairs and institutions are created, financed and perspectives and paradigms are artificially built. Exchanges of scholars are institutionalized, research projects are funded and journals are published. The invisible subterranean political goals are carefully concealed under the academic respectability.

The marketability of knowledge is part of the culture of consumerism. Knowledge is both politicized and then commoditized. Perceptions and views are communicated in such a way that they appear both relevant and true. The political purpose of such a knowledge is to establish not merely political hegemony but latently economic and cultural hegemony. The contemporary western democracy does not point nor promote multi-layered participation of people. Elections are contested on criteria other than rational-ethical criteria of competence and character but populist appeal, which is appropriately, artificially and sanctimoniously built. Freedom becomes a means to express the dominant view through mass-media. It serves the vested interest of powerful. The ideal of anybody theoretically going at the top is structurally and realistically closed for all but a few. Democracy can bear contradictions and also permit freedom of exploitation. But the voice of reason and fairness is silenced or marginalized.



The concealed suppression is fed with either popular mass culture or drugs and violence. It helps in maintenance of power. The sanity gets overpowered through state violence on the one hand and terrorism on the other. The normative structure is replaced by the technical norms of expediency. In such a generalized societal situation, knowledge assumes independent legitimacy. The conceptual verbosity, theoretical perspectives and cognitive paradigms lead to necessary mystification, so central for politics of knowledge. The political power and knowledge-hegemony go together. The reality of knowledge-motivation and social reality are converted into political definition of reality. Such a definition becomes real in its consequences.

This is not to suggest that intellectual alternatives do not get expression. However, the critiques of dominant intellectual mode do not find institutional and formal support. It does not find favour as it does not help the pragmatic aspect of academic professional or policy oriented administrative career either in the nations of centre or nations of periphery. The intellectuals of Third World countries get trained in western educational paradigm and are lured to seek career which focus on western mode of understanding as well as societal planning.

The voices of dissent are required to use the same channels of communication of which they are critique. This poses a moral dilemma of choice-contraction between ideas and action on the one hand, and on the other there is inaccessibility of the channels to them, to voice dissent and present such alternatives which hit the powerful.

In the knowledge game, the politics of knowledge has built its own logic, categories and schema of interpretations which has inbuilt capacity to manipulate data and present its own truth. The criterion of truth and its assumptions are also

framed in such a manner that it justifies itself as valid, significant and morally imperative and universal.

The politics of knowledge has acquired inbuilt capacity to discard old and untenable views when they are not able to withstand the new logical alternatives. The racial theory is discarded and low achievements are explained away on personality criteria or cultural criteria.

The processual dimension of cognitive creation is so structured on the one hand that the politics of knowledge is converted into myth of normalcy, while on the other hand the presentation of knowledge is determined by other-directed criteria of pragmatic-career benefit rather than inner-motivational freedom. These twin bases determine the dominant cognitive paradigm in the academic-profession as well as avocational intellectuals.

### **Emergence of South Asian Studies**

South Asian Studies emerged out of political need to deal with countries in Asia freed from colonial rule.<sup>3</sup> The United States, as a big power during that period, was keen to exert its influence on the countries of South Asia and ensure that these countries do not adopt communism or align with the then other super powers. The political need for understanding these countries was important and imperative and for a country which had democratic polity with ostensible commitment to freedom in all realms, establishment of South Asian Studies Centre within or outside the university system was both necessary and relevant. The latent intended motivation was political, although manifest intended and unintended consequences which were to follow were academically and politically variant.

One of the consequences for the academic culture of South Asian countries was part of wider academic im-

perialism. The perspective, the problems, conceptual articulation and theoretical approaches were modelled on western paradigm. The colonial background of South Asian countries was converted into alternative perspective and interpretation and reinterpretation were given so as to subsume or use the colonial mode of analysis for imperialistic hegemony. The initial history of these countries was written by the colonial masters. The colonialism was political hegemony with overt and covert control over the subject nations. The administrative control and legitimation through conquest or manipulation legitimized the sovereignty of the colonial powers. It led to exploitation of economic resources and raw material, thereby making the colonialized countries poor. Political empowerment, economic enrichment and territorial expansion were the direct benefits which accrued to the colonial powers.

These scholars missed the ethos of territorial and historically focused on problematics of rulers, their feuds and fights. The social and cultural dogmas and superstitions which emerged at a particular period of history due to circumstantial traps, were made to be seen as ever existent. There was overbearing attitude of "white man's burden" in the historical discourse and construct of Indian sub-continent. After the achievement of independence by these countries, the academic colonialism was replaced by academic structure and ethos which would serve the purpose of imperialistic powers. Such an imperialism was characterized by: (i) indirect invisible but real political hegemony; (ii) the power was acquired not by territorial subjugation through conquest but by military supremacy, diplomacy of alignment, manipulation of feuds between developing nations and UN; (iii) the power was intended to operate at multiple levels—economic, cultural and ideological; and (iv) aid, loans and control through World Bank, IMF, multi-nationals and traders in

arms, were institutional mechanism to weaken the countries by substitution of perceived needs, and criteria of health, education, nutrition, aesthetics, entertainment, ideas, ideology and even mores and norms.

Thus, understanding of South Asia by the new interpretations was substitution of perspective and idiom but the purpose essentially remained the same.

These authors generally neglected the social structure and culture of people specially in the context of unified cultural holistic map, characterized by multiplicity of political powers and territorial sovereignties. Culture subsumed polity. The historians superimposed polity and gave it ontological priority whereby culture was not only subordinated but also misinterpreted. The political need necessitated a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach whereby the social structure, culture, economy, polity subsuming dimensions of religion, caste, family, tradition, economy, development, planning, status of women, democracy, elections, language, foreign policy, regional organizations, foreign trade, aid, relations between countries of South Asia, military strength, communication, modernization, technological development, multi-national, environment, population, ethnic conflicts—became highly significant in the context of relations of the U.S. with the countries of South Asia. Study and analysis of diverse areas of society, polity and culture from a holistic multi-disciplinary perspective was meant to provide relevant, systematic and analytical understanding of the region so that the policies of imperial powers could be accordingly formulated and operationalized.

The academic interest in South Asia was politically induced. Apart from the partly erroneous and one-sided construction of history of South Asia, other theoretical approaches and conceptual framework articulated through

terms like 'development' and 'modernization', led to a priori assumptions of South Asian countries being backward and underdeveloped. The indicators of quality of life were specified by the powerful nations based on a materialistic world-view which ultimately catered to the vested interest of powerful multi-nationals. The artificial generation of unwanted wants, was meant to create conditions of pathological obsession for consumption, and to economitize all human needs, aspirations and hopes.

The ecological, cultural and structural specificities of South Asian countries were not taken into consideration. The strength and uniqueness of the region lies therein. The universalistic goals of development were set, identified and established by the western nations.

The policy makers and academics were so conditioned that these models were considered appropriate and adopted in the policy and executional aspects by the South Asian countries. It was in the interest of big political powers to ensure that the South Asian countries do not get united and emerge as power to be reckoned with. The military support, assistance, aid—were manipulated mechanisms to put one South Asian country against the other. The colonial powers ruled, by dividing the people 'within', the imperialist power established their hegemony by dividing the South Asian countries 'between themselves'. Ethnicity which had provided a richness of culture—a rainbow culture and had been an instrument of creative diversity, became a tool for divisiveness, terrorism, conflict and animosity. The cognitive interpretation of historical reality by western scholars generally was constructed as a continuous process of ethnic and religious strifes between communities. Such an unrealistic and distorted version led to misconstrued historical memories which became significant as they were perceived in

the context of contemporary ill-will, formed and framed by colonial powers and nurtured by imperialistic interests.

The political interest was converted into intellectual interest, which in academic terms, meant imitation and adoption of western model and paradigm for the study of regional-cultural, economic and social dimensions of the life of the people. The formal-academic structure of universities and academic institutions of South Asian countries adopted it with easy facilitation. The intellectual treatise on South Asia have thus dealt with problematic issues which have been perceived and interpreted from the western paradigmatic schema.

Thus, the primary political motivation for studies on South Asia was buttressed by secondary academic imperialistic consequence of following the western cognitive paradigm for understanding of one's own society.

The misreading of Indian sub-continent is evidenced in several cognitive blunders. For example, to suggest that the striking feature of ancient civilization in the sub-continent was lack of orientation for statehood, reveals the intellectual conditioning to see past from the perspective of present (of west).<sup>4</sup> The lament for absence of national language in India<sup>5</sup> is again misreading of the temporal setting of a civilization. To prefer separation of religion and society, could be the need of contemporary times, but *dharma* gave normative order to the society in the past. *Dharma* regulated every aspect of life—in relation to others, in relation to material activities, in relation to nature—plants, animals and gods. All social institutions were normatively ordained. *Dharma* was not a narrow religion as its English translation makes out it to be. There was no political confrontation between Hinduism and Islam until the British rule. Religion, culture, society and polity had different meanings and performed different functions in the past.

The study of Indian sub-continent often provides accounts given by travellers. Megasthenese, who came to India in 300 B.C., gives first general view of India as seen by a visitor. Many other voyagers to India after him remarked upon the distinctive social order based on specialized social groups. The rigour of social divisions looked unfamiliar to them. The subsequent conquest by invaders led to construction of history from the perspective of conquerors. However, British invaded India without making efforts for assimilation in it. They ruled remotely and looked at it in derogatory terms which was necessary for governance. Thus, their administrative view of India was different from their predecessors. Cognitizing India was thus motivationally directed by their own interests of governance. Thus, voyagers' view, conquerors' view, colonial view and imperialistic view—all provided variant perspectives of social reality of Indian sub-continent.

The contemporary social scientists have taken largely contextual fact based view of Indian society, neglecting the civilizational normative-textual perspective of India. Sri Aurobindo has reinterepreted Indian culture in the abstract spiritual perspective, while Gandhi has provided the realistic contemporary situational analysis of India through positive perspective of tradition. Sociologists and anthropologists have done empirical studies of village, caste and family through western theoretical orientation without providing an encompassing view of composite culture.

### **Regional Studies: The Local Context**

The process of development of South Asian Studies in India reveals subtle political support as well as dominance of political scientists who have pursued their academic interests in this area. Such a dominance has led to development of distinct political science perspective in this area of study. Political

science departments have pursued studies in the areas of South Asia. For academic-historical reasons, the political science perspective dominated the study on South Asia. The tendency of empire building in academics further buttressed the connection between political science as a discipline and South Asia as a major theme.

It is interesting to know that South Asia Studies Centre (SASC) began as a part of the Department of Political Science in 1963 at the University of Rajasthan.<sup>6</sup> It acquired a status of independent centre much later. For reasons of historical legacy despite interdisciplinary focus of centre, the faculty consists largely of political scientists. Out of seventeen faculty members listed in SASC annual report, twelve are political scientists, two historians, one economist and two sociologists.<sup>7</sup> The research projects submitted, ongoing projects, SASC publications, and PhD works in progress, as mentioned in the report, reveal emphasis on political aspects of South Asia region.<sup>8</sup> Apart from the historical legacy, even the dominant public and academic perception of South Asian Studies is political. This perception gets strengthened and institutionalized in view of thematic interests which are largely confined to political relations between countries of South Asia and other related political dimensions. For various reasons, including historical, external-imperialistic, non-availability of South Asia scholars in other disciplines, the area study centres, all over the country have mainly concentrated on political and historical studies, which obviously has weakened the inter-disciplinary orientation.

### **The Theoretical Issues**

The contention of this work is to emphasize the need for interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach in regional studies. This is imperative by the very nature of such studies.



The inter-disciplinary approach focuses on the need for creating broad academic ethos where scholars of different disciplines interact, communicate and present disciplinary inputs to widen mutual cognitive horizon. Its pre-requisites are team work, parity of disciplines, diversity of themes, rigorous inter-disciplinary inputs in the course contents and continuous process of multi-disciplinary discourses.

The trans-disciplinary approach enables a scholar to imbibe a holistic perspective to view a social phenomenon. Such a world-view emerges from one's exposure to diverse cognitive orientations, approaches, perspectives, themes and disciplines.

It is, therefore, necessary to identify and discuss the diverse approaches in the study of South Asian countries. Since such a study has been categorized as regional and area study, it has not been conceived as a discipline in the classical sense.

The notion of area or region has been defined in different ways. From a wider perspective of *space*, such a notion has not merely political, sociological, geographical, economic but also philosophical, ethical and psychological meanings. A region has been characterized as a homogeneous area with physical and cultural characteristics distinct from those of other regions. As a part of national domain (region within country), a region is sufficiently unified to have a consciousness of its customs and ideals and thus possesses a sense of identity distinct from rest of the country.<sup>9</sup> However, perspective which constructs space beyond a sovereign state sharing commonality of history, culture, social structure and personality, is extremely relevant cognitively. Geographical contiguity may or may not be very relevant according to Nye, who suggests that *effective proximity* is more significant than geographical proximity.<sup>10</sup> Regionalism has been seen as a

form of political order builder also.<sup>11</sup> It has both the connotations—regionalism as a processual step towards globalization and regionalism as a homogeneous category for mutual support or for hegemony by powers that be.

As a conceptual category in social sciences, regionalism denotes micro-communities within nations as well as macro-communities beyond nations.<sup>12</sup> Thus, region, nation and sub-region reveal meanings which have psycho-socio-politico-economic and cultural implications—both in terms of historicity as well as contemporaneity. Such a notion of regionalism represents the regional idea in action, as an ideology, as a social movement or as the theoretical basis for regional planning, relationships and analysis of a region.<sup>13</sup>

The theoretical orientations in such an area of inquiry need to be appropriately built. The historical approach aims at construction of the events, institutions, structure and culture in the temporal-spatial frame processually. It helps in understanding the integrated view of individual, society and culture; observable external as well as subjective-internal; normative and valuational taking into account the areas covered—their emergence, expansion, contraction and extinction. History is a process, it is integral; it constructs and deconstructs. The historical approach is relevant as the processual dimension of acculturation, structuration, political boundaries and shared experiences have been both continuous and cumulative. The historical approach ought to incorporate: (1) the use and understanding of classical texts; (2) the use and understanding of recorded history, archives etc.; (3) the use and understanding of folklore, literature, tradition; and (4) understanding of mythology, myths and the interlinkages between the above aspects can help in deconstruction of present history and reconstruction of history. This would give us new meanings and eliminate biases introduced

by colonial and imperialist historians.

The structural approach can be used in identification of patterns of activities and relationship between parts of system. It believes that the arrangements of the parts is more important than the parts themselves. Structures are emergent properties because they emerge from the arrangements or interaction between the parts. Structuralists are, thus, concerned with societal forms and not with the unique contents of these forms. Some structuralists emphasize the dimension of role, others view it as organization. The structuralists deal with the fact that societal life is reproduced, reaffirmed, repeated than with the fact that it is produced by human beings. In certain sense, structuralist view is both deterministic as well as objectivist.

The phenomenological and ethnomethodological approaches focus on subjective, processual and contextual dimensions of human activities. The comparative approach focuses on identification of similarities and dissimilarities—both in terms of space and time. The functional approach aims at interpretation of integrative consequences of activities on the system, while conflict approach lays emphasis on the dialectics and views society in terms of contradictions, struggle, exploitation and inequality.

The world system approach amply demonstrates the immense control of nations of 'centre' over nations of 'periphery'.<sup>14</sup> It demonstrates the existence of global system which influences its parts in a manner which ultimately takes the processual and institutionalized format of economic, technological, cultural and cognitive hegemony of powerful nations.

The framework of tradition, modernity and postmodernism becomes extremely relevant in the context of South Asia. The notion of development, the problematics of society, the issue of quality of life, the impact of technology, con-

sumerism, imperialism and impact of globalization of communication, styles of life, ideas and ideology have assumed significance in the post-modernistic debates. Postmodernism focus on humanism instead of scienticism, on co-operation and not competition, on feelings and not rationality, on integral view rather than specialized view of a phenomenon. This is in contrast to what modernism has stood for. The construction of indigenous paradigm for cognitive analysis is vital issue in the debates of academics in contemporary social sciences. It might necessitate process of deconstruction of colonial imperialistic knowledge and thereby create a new identity for the social scientists and social sciences in South Asian countries.

The above discussion basically is intended to stress the need for understanding the manifest and latent political forces for the emergence of South Asia Studies, to highlight the need for inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary studies in this area and to stress the importance of theoretical approaches in research and study of area studies.

### Notes

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## Chapter II

### **SOUTH ASIA AS A REGION: THE CONCEPTUAL FORMULATION**

The notion of a region which is to be seen in the framework of space does not mean territoriality in geographical sense. The concept of region on purely geographical basis would lead to soullessness and shall be devoid of any human formations—structural, cultural, processual, historical and human. The concept of region takes into account the social scientist's perspective of space. Space and spaces have meanings which are socially relevant, politically meaningful, culturally vibrant, economically similar and psychically encompassing. It has integral and holistic unity marked by internal imbalances, contradictions, opposition, as emergent properties of power of divisiveness. The notion of private and public space, the power and status relationship, the differential organization of space conveying functional meaning of activities, reveal that space is not a geographical-ecological phenomenon but consists of meanings having social, cultural, economic, political, psychological and spiritual bearings.

Region is a term which has to be viewed within the

broader conceptual construct of space. Region can be defined as geographical space bearing certain common historical, economic, social, cultural homogeneity sustaining territorially different sovereign states, built and rebuilt through circumstances and forces of political dynamics. The territorial sovereignty historically tends to change. The shared experience of the people is the subjective dimension of the region while the objective aspects are characterized by institutional and cultural aspects of individual and group life.

Geographical contiguity as a functional pre-requisite to constitute a region has been debated. Cultural homogeneity, despite geographical distance, is both an empirical fact and theoretical possibility. It is possible to talk about effective proximity minus geographical contiguity and effective distance despite 'geographical continuity'. However, the general empirical reality reveals that shared 'locale' and 'space' help in the formation of homogeneity which politically are separated and can be manipulated for conflict or purposefully used for co-operation. Thus, political power can create overt chasm despite cultural and social homogenization. The possible combinations between geography, culture and polity can be formulated as under:

1. Geographical dimension: Proximity, +,
  - (a) Cultural and social dimensions: Homogeneous, +,
  - (b) Political dimension: Co-operation, +,
2. Geographical dimension: Proximity, +,
  - (a) Cultural and social dimension: Homogeneous, +,
  - (a) Political dimension: Heterogeneous, -,
3. Geographical dimension: Proximity, +,
  - (a) Cultural and social dimension: Heterogeneous, -,
  - (a) Political dimension: Homogeneous, +,
4. Geographical dimension, Proximity, +,
  - (a) Cultural and social dimension: Heterogeneous, -.

- (b) Political dimension: Heterogeneous, —,
- 5. Geographical dimension: Discontinuity, —,
  - (a) Cultural dimension: Homogeneous, +,
  - (b) Political dimension: Homogeneous, +
- 6. Geographical dimension: Discontinuity, —,
  - (a) Cultural dimension: Homogeneous, +,
  - (b) Political dimension: Heterogeneous, —,
- 7. Geographical dimension: Discontinuity, —,
  - (a) Cultural dimension: Heterogeneous, —,
  - (b) Political dimension: Heterogeneous, —,
- 8. Geographical dimension: Discontinuity, —,
  - (a) Cultural dimension: Heterogeneous, —,
  - (b) Political dimension: Homogeneous, +,

The schematic paradigm reveals the possibility of examining the concept of a region not in terms of biopolarity but as a processual continuity from perfect region to non-region, hence of continuum and not polarity. However, the concept of region, since it is dominated by political perspective, has operationally accepted the elements of geographical continuity, cultural homogeneity but not political co-operation in the context of South Asia. Under the sway of international relations, the aspects of conflicts have been both created and emphasized, as that is part of empirical reality at political level. This brings in the question of power of polity over the homogeneity of culture. In traditional societies culture overpowered polity and was separated at the level of generality of society. Polity did not interfere or influenced nor controlled the social, institutional or culturally expressive formations. Community decided family, social hierarchy, occupation and inter-personal, inter-community relationships. State merely was concerned with collection of taxes and protection from external invasion. The power of the state was restrictively in few domain. This was necessary



unrestricted power of the state could be detrimental to the processual free development of individual and community. The wider identity of nation was made up of culture and not territorial sovereignties.

The process of democratization, supported by mass communication, has diffused the polity and power in the social structures and consciousness of people. This has resulted into politicization of almost all institutions excepting the family in the Indian sub-continent. It is such a perspective which has led to division of world into fifteen regions. They are North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Russia, North Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, West Asia (Middle East), South Asia, South-East Asia, East Asia and South-West Pacific.<sup>1</sup> It is in this framework that the concept of region has been mainly interpreted in international relations. This has been done in three ways:

- (a) As subordinate system (against the background of superpower system).
- (b) As units of economic integration (regional co-operation).
- (c) As regional organizations (emphasis on organizational aspects).<sup>2</sup>

In such a perspective the first view has so much dominated the South Asia region that the other two have been relegated in the background. South Asia as region in post-colonial era has revealed continuous strife, conflict, mistrust and problems between governments, indirectly and subtly created, sponsored and aided by imperial powers.

The notion of region should be viewed integrally as well as pluralistically and should deal with not merely factors and forces of geographical proximity but also cultural and social homogeneity created by historical processes at the level of people.

In a democratic set-up, the people's life and culture ought to be considered vital. However, the power and polity often manipulate the cultural homogeneity into sub-cultural divisiveness, both within the region and between the regions. The 'abstracted people' is eulogized, praised and paid lip service while the 'empirical people' is subordinated to elite, made to suffer and be a pawn in such a power game.

Regional studies, being interdisciplinary and policy-oriented, can be problem-solving and purposeful. The question is for whom the knowledge is being created and with what purpose. Intellectuals are seen to be trans-national at certain abstracted level of their thought and vision. They can play more positive and effective role through generation of ideas, views and writings. The cognitive enterprise of South Asian scholars should not be seen as service to specific political powers. This would distort reality and lead to polemics between scholars of this region leading to dominance of non-regional scholars who shall play the role of academic arbitration. Scholars of South Asia ought to use knowledge for creating harmonious relations and peace between countries of South Asia, which are beset with continuous overt and covert struggle. The commitment to objective study and commitment to use knowledge from humanistic perspective need to be integrated, despite conflict between academic values, patriotic values and political consequences of intellectual and morally honest stand.

This would lead to subordination of pragmatic to academic-ethical. At a time when talk of new world order is becoming important, the role of intellectuals cannot be marginalized. Such an endeavour would mean that South Asian Studies should focus on people, their culture, social institution, economy, aspirations and suggest means for co-operation for initiating common and shared programmes for development, population control, environmental improve-

ment, gender equality, health, education, employment etc., so that economic exploitation and cultural imperialism of west can be stopped. It is truism to say that greater divisiveness and conflict in South Asia help those who sale armaments, consumer goods and those who are world powers.

The concept of South Asia as a region has not been constant one. The meaning of South Asia has been processually shifting. The definitional-shifts reveal cognitive-uneasiness, political interests and mental-conditioning for modern academic paradigm as well shifting of territorial control and emergence of new territories and divisions of existing ones. Through different phases of history, its connotation and denotation have changed.<sup>3</sup> Pannikar identified all countries from India to Indonesia as a single region.<sup>4</sup> South Asia comprises seven states, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan and Burma have been considered to belong to South-West Asia and South-East Asia regions respectively.

This concept, definitionally, has been formally recognized by the formation of SAARC. The objective criteria of defining a region seem inadequate, thus operational and functional criteria have been accepted on political grounds. Obviously definition of South Asia can hardly be a permanent one.

Geographically, South Asia forms a distinct spatial identity. It is bound on the north by the Pamir-Knot and the greatest chain of mountain flows out from it. The total area of this region is 5,750,143 km.<sup>2</sup> It has 3.3 percent of the land area and the total population of the region is 1073.5 million.<sup>5</sup>

The constant variable of geography makes it a base for determining the region. Other variables of history, polity, culture and economy processually keep on changing. Thus, location of South Asia is characterized by geographical contiguity.

as well as compactness. India occupies a crucial position of centrality while other countries are bordering on its periphery. It is said to be the 'fulcrum' of the area. The geographical base of region assumes relevance in social sciences when interpreted and understood in relation to shared history, commonality of culture and social structure, despite diversities within states. These countries reveal commonality at several levels and dimensions to such an extent that sub-culture and social structure of a state are similar to other state than other sub-cultures within the state. It is this commonality which makes the notion of region potentially positive in terms of co-operation and mutuality of reciprocity in various areas having bilateral significance.

The polity and power, often outside the region, have been responsible for the divisiveness and strife in the region. Thus, there is cleavage between the political and socio-cultural aspects of South Asian region created politically by powers that be. This cleavage has led to strife and tension largely between India and other states of the region. The commonalties which are shared by the countries of this area make this region socially, culturally, historically, economically, ecologically and demographically meaningful. The spirit of regionalization covertly exists at the level of generality of people and can be exploited for meaningful positive mutual advantage.<sup>7</sup> The composition of population is characterized by diversity of racial elements. The religions in the region are Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity. India has a population of 85 per cent Hindus and 10 per cent Muslims; Pakistan 88 per cent Muslims and 5 per cent Hindus. Nepal has predominantly Hindu population while Sri Lanka and Bhutan have predominantly Buddhist population.<sup>8</sup> The places of pilgrimages located in different states are being visited by people of the region. Language is one of the potent instrumen-

talities of culture which is transmitted through social heredity. It is *sine-quo-non* of interaction and communication leading to formation of invisible and visible threads of relationship. It has provided identity and created sense of oneness.

South Asia is a multi-linguistic region. North India and Pakistan have linguistic similarity and sameness. Urdu, which is official language of Pakistan, is spoken by people in North India and is also one of the languages constitutionally recognized in India. Bengali is one of the national languages of India. It is the official language of Bangladesh. Tamil is spoken in South India and is recognized in Sri Lanka as a second language. Hindi, the official language of India, is widely spoken in Nepal as a modified dialect. English, although spoken by a minority elite, has served as a link language after colonial hegemony of British. Music, literature and dance have also been trans-national in the region. The art and architect have commonalties. Some videos cassettes of movies and plays are equally watched by middle classes in different states of the region. At cultural level, there is significant degree of commonalty of taste, aesthetic appreciation and reciprocal mutuality indicating deeper non-political holistic unity.

The style of life has great deal of similarity in this region. The food, dress, manners and mannerism, the decor, gait, argot, demeanour tend to be more akin between the people of the region than westerners. South Asian living outside this region in U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Germany and other countries look, behave and live so alike that the westerners can distinguish them only through passport or opinions on Kashmir or terrorism. 'Pakis' is a derogatory term used for all who come from South Asia in London. In fact, the discovery of South Asia as a compact region becomes evident when one who belongs to region perceives it from London or New York

The 'insider' has to be 'outsider' to view the reality of the region effectively and holistically. In an alien land when people of the region are located together, the realization of commonalty of physicality, culture and styles of life become potentially visible. Incidentally they suffer the same deprivations and prejudices. The realization of regional commonalty becomes directly visible and consciously apparent.

The economy of the region is predominantly rural and agricultural. The process of industrialization began effectively in the post-colonial era. The multi-nationals have entered in all the states in the region. The World Bank, IMF and economic aid are the institutional economic support for these countries, having diverse economic, political and cultural consequences. The countries of South Asia are characterized by low level of standard of life, increasing middle class consumerism and poverty of a large section of population, has low per capita income, malnutrition, excessive dependence on agriculture, low labour productivity, unemployment, inequality of income and low level of industrial development which are common features of the states in the region.

The historicity of South Asia reveals one of the oldest civilization with pluralistic cultures. Despite political and territorial divisions, the civilizational sway and cultural ethos unified the people and institutions which subterraneanly sustain them. British rule brought politically the countries of South Asia under a common colonial umbrella. The British economically exploited the people of the region and created divisiveness in the composite culture of the region. They replaced the traditional institutions—legal, medicinal, educational and administrative—by the western ones without realizing the dissonance between the indigenous reality and western institutional instrumentalities.

and memories were by

tatorship, Nepal and Bhutan traditional monarchies, while Maldives has one party rule. After fifteen years, at the helm of affairs, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom is still largely the unquestionable leader of the Maldives. The economy of the island is fairly strong, with the tourism and fisheries sectors providing the foundation to build on. It is predominantly import-oriented economy, and the objective of the government has always been to export enough to be in a position to finance the imports. Expatriate labour in Male and some other islands has emerged as source of tension. Orthodox Muslim clergy is worried about the modernization and are trying to preserve the Muslim ways. India has had continuous democratic governments despite political abuses in the system.

The external influence has led to continuity of strife and non-cohesiveness. Despite formal non-alignment, the covert, overt, formal and informal linkages with external power have buttressed and furthered conflicts within the region. The particularistic ethos, which sustained traditional societies, came in conflict with rational universalistic model of west. Self-individual overpowered the altruistic communality, religion dominated secularism, humanism and co-operation were displaced by scienticism and competition in such a way that the chasm within the nation society increased. The region witnessed a 'small west' dominating the general masses.

India, being a big country, was seen through suspicious eyes by neighbouring countries. The misplaced fear from India has led to disadvantage to all the states. To be 'big' was 'ugly'. Regional co-operation in economy has confined to underworld smuggling having its consequences in several other spheres. The divergence of interest has led to weakening of South Asia as a region. The region is divided in several ways. Politically it has emerged a divisive region; culturally, socially and historically it is homogeneous.

South Asia is an Indo-centric region which has led to Indo-centric-dyadic relations between various states and which have had problems with India. India by its sheer size and population has been seen as a threat of future in case it is permitted to develop and materially prosper. As a part of political strategy, it became necessary to weaken it and convert its relations with neighbours from normalcy to hostility. The Indo-phobia has been created and sustained through political propaganda for maintenance of power. This has led to sponsored mass hatred and distrust between the people of the region. Besides, the internal problems are externally highlighted through communicational network and political interference. After disintegration of U.S.S.R., the U.S. has assumed unchallenged position of supremacy. The U.S. has openly asked India to keep restraint on the Hazratbal incident in Kashmir. This is obviously uncalled for interference in the internal matter of India. The West has provided vital support to Yeltsin. It has put a lot of pressure through the World Bank and the IMF on Russia to immediately move to a market economy. Yeltsin is seen by critics as a vain man driven by hatreds, a maverick singularly bereft of vision, without any programme other than that of building a grotesque version of Mafia capitalism. The failure of transition to a market economy is largely attributed to western-dictated 'shock therapy', mindless privatization, sudden price deregulation and catastrophic output and income-reduction policies.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the globalization of the U.S. power and its world supremacy in power, after the disintegration of U.S.S.R., makes the South Asia as a region more vulnerable and weak. The totalization of power would ultimately lead to its potential for mistakes based on intoxicant arrogance. World is much safer under balance of power through two, than sin-



gularistic concentration of power in one.

Thus, SAARC is one of the more economically backward region in the world. The seven member-states account for 20 per cent of the world's population living on the 11 per cent of the world's land area. They generate only 2 per cent of the world's GNP. The majority of the people survive through the direct dependence on the natural resources of the region. The predominant economic activity is agriculture-based, largely on traditional practices and methods. Many consumer goods are imported since industrialization is at a low level. Illiteracy and poverty are widespread, health care and housing are inadequate and a sizable part of the population is chronically undernourished.<sup>11</sup>

Despite this the SAARC region has a history and tradition of conservation, environment friendly life styles, great respect for plants, animal, and an attitude of living in harmony with them. A region has to address its problems through programmes of rural development, industrialization, population planning, health care, sanitation and housing, pollution control, scientific forest management and afforestation, improved agriculture and management of water resources, flood control and the incorporation of environmental concerns into national planning.<sup>12</sup>

According to one estimate, the number of Asians living in the abject poverty has decreased from 400 million to 180 million. By the year 2000, one billion Asians will live in homes with some consumer-spending power. Almost half of these people will have what U.S. defines as middle class incomes.<sup>13</sup>

Despite this, it is true that the crisis of South Asia is characterized by deep-seated poverty, unemployment, low per-capita income, high unemployment, slum sector, terrorism and

Thus, the domestic factors, national policies pursued by divided South Asian nations, their inter relations and inter-play of global and regional political and economic forces affect its development as well as inter-people relationships. Social conflicts and tensions in countries have inevitable spillover effects on their neighbours. The forces of democracy have been strengthened recently in practically all South Asian countries. The functional pre-requisites of democracy, such as secularism, free elections, freedom of press and religion, are not fully manifested in all South Asian countries.

The external global aspects, namely, disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union, development of East Europe, German reunification and the East-West systematic convergence are going to have far-reaching effects on the South Asian countries.

SAARC was set up in 1985. Since then certain development within its framework have been initiated but the pace of progress is painfully slow. On a bilateral level, there are spurts of crisis-nursing and crises escalating, and the trend is so zig-zag that it does not reveal any trend.

Two difficulties continue to persist. One is the asymmetry issue arising from India's size and the centrality of location and the other is due to the existence of long and unresolved bilateral problems. The need for friendly perceptions is urgent as any co-operation with unfriendly perception is always full of suspicion. Regional co-operation in South Asia should not be confused with the sum total of India's bilateral co-operation with its neighbours. South Asian countries need to work out appropriate responses at national, bilateral, sub-regional, regional, inter-regional and international levels which would help their people in meeting the challenges facing them and utilizing the opportunities that beckon them.

The social and cultural communication should help in protecting the shared heritage and shared futuristic concerns of SAARC countries. The media should project positive dimensions of social and cultural similarities of these countries. The governments should promote cultural and social exchanges, permit people to foster inter-personal friendship and unite them in fighting common enemies like exploitative external agencies, poverty, illiteracy and superstitions. The impact on the South Asian region of the 'green house effect' need to be tackled jointly.

Much of defence budgets could be reduced for developmental processes. These countries must seriously tackle all problems that cause friction bilaterally and regionally. Narrow domestic political considerations should not be mixed up with foreign policy.

Given the above perspective and reality, the task of scholars on South Asia has to be more apolitical, which would necessitate an objective analysis based on paradigm-shift in the academic schema of South Asian Studies.

It would necessitate shift in themes, rigour of theory, building of indigenous conceptual categories for analysis, deconstruction of history and creation of new regional identity for mutual support and development. The post-modern South Asian paradigm ought to focus on humanistic-indigenous framework with sensitivity for people's issues rather than on issues created by, for and of the government for political purposes.

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## Chapter III

### COGNITIZING SOUTH ASIA: FREEDOM FROM IMPERIAL KNOWLEDGE

The way in which colonial and imperialist academics have constructed Indian sub-continent needs to be carefully examined and deconstructed. "India's 'natural' disunity can be converted into 'unity' by the centralized authoritarian rule imposed from outside."<sup>1</sup> By such a statement, the colonial historian Smith takes upon himself the role of imperial bureaucrat and arrogantly but ignorantly writes that in political institutions no evolution has taken place in India neither in Maurya, nor Gupta periods nor when Muslims invaded.<sup>2</sup>

#### Colonial Cognition

Smith's Indology belongs to a much larger movement of the world dominance. His metaphor of a polity is that of a single body. The view of the world as depicted by Smith needs to be examined through his motivated assumptions, rather than scanning of facts in the text. The motivation in writing of history is of great significance. The *divine part* is less and less fact-based, it provides only bits of facts. The *human part* is

around selective facts, and this misleading is important. The  
 political order is not a natural order but necessarily a product  
 of human activity over other orders. Smith alleged that Indian  
 civilization had not ever possessed the political order that  
 flows from rationality. This view assumes rationality to be  
 the premise of action and not the result of action in accordance  
 with existential circumstances. Rationality has to be viewed  
 in the context of forces as a particular thing.  
 Social science of the West stands in relation of tension to  
 its subject matter as a potential instrument of the expansion  
 of rational autonomy of action, but equally as potential  
 instrument of domination. The purpose of their sciences has  
 been to constitute these others as agents who can be managed  
 whose behavior can be controlled and predicted, and thereby  
 rationalizing because it claims that a privileged position  
 in the social order is the dispensable and the displacement of  
 agents above which it knows it knows and some kind of  
 administrative expertise based on that superior knowledge and  
 the ability to control forces to which it is related to  
 replace political action or thereby reduce its sphere of  
 influence.

liberal or conservative historians and sociologists.<sup>7</sup>

The United States has gained primacy in imperial formation of global dimensions. It has proved that attraction of consumer goods is more powerful than the threat of missiles. It has both. The Soviet Union has been destroyed without Third World war and now the U.S. can dictate Russia to break the agreement with India and can choose to attack Iraq for allegedly having at some point of time planned to assassinate its former president although CIA might have killed or planned to kill some heads of the states in different parts of the world. Sadly, so powerful is the power of U.S. that the United Nations is silent so are other nations and largely the academics and intellectuals are meek and mute to react.

### Imperial Cognition

Integral to the idea of 'imperial formation' is the notion of 'imperial knowledges'. The deployers of this knowledge are hegemonic agents. They are the writers and institutions (for instance, a John Maynard Keynes or Milton Friedman, the World Bank or International Monetary Fund in economic debates) that have dominated the public discussions about others. In the nineteenth century Europe and now in U.S.A., these persons and institutions, as hegemonic agents, have offered up metaphor-plated essence—rationality, the individual, the free market, the welfare state—and declared that it is realized in its most 'developed' form in the 'west'.

The term 'orientalism' (now replaced by the expression 'Asian Studies') has been used to designate perspectives as determined by imperial knowledge. There is no discipline that takes as its object, the study of the whole of the disciplines which constituted the more or less coherent system of the nineteenth century. The study of the history of the discipline of history and textual studies is a

Sinology, Indology, Arabic and Islamic Studies. Since the Second World War, they are being termed as 'language and area studies'.

The discourse of orientalisists (western) present itself as a form of knowledge that is both different from and superior to the knowledge that the orientals have of themselves. Backed by government funds, disseminated by universities, supported by the ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) and the SSRC (Social Science Research Council), endowed by the Ford Foundation, and given space in the New York Review of Books, the knowledge of the orientalist, known now a days as an area studies specialist, appears as rational, logical, scientific, realistic, and objective.<sup>3</sup> There are several centres of South Asian Studies in West. They cognitize within the framework, idiom, conceptual categories and theoretical orientations which have been current in contemporary social sciences, hence has mentally conditioned and habituated the reader to comprehend in a particular way, both in Indian sub-continent and abroad. Many scholars visit the sub-continent to study the region at micro, national or regional level. The knowledge of the orientals, by contrast, often is interpreted as irrational, illogical, unscientific, unrealistic and subjective. This places west in relationship of intellectual superiority and hence domination over Asian. The area studies have authorized specialists to aid and advise, develop and modernize, arm and stabilize the countries of the so-called Third World.

### Postmodernity: Meaning and Focus

This colonial, imperial, western paradigm of South Asia appears to be deconstructed. Interestingly, the postmodernism needs to borrow the basic tenets of cognitive orientalism from traditions of South Asia. The defining characteristics of



postmodernism are humanism, historicity, avant-gardes and referentiality. It is (i) an attempt to restore humanism, (ii) is a try at reconstituting the historical dimensions, (iii) rejects avant-gardes in favour of convention, and (iv) not self-referential, but other-referential.<sup>9</sup>

The scienticism of West has given unequal material prosperity and has created immense human problems at social and personal levels of existence of people. As a reaction, a counter-culture, humanistic in orientation, has developed against technologism and scienticism. The western model of development has inherent potential of self-destruction enveloping the global collectivity. The alternative has to be constructed both cognitively and structurally. The imperial knowledge is domineering, non-liberating, materialistic, self-oriented and has not been able to grasp the meaning of universe, human society, transcendence and unity of knowledge from the mystic, intuitive, indigenous-essentialistic perspective of cosmic reality manifested at societal level in pluralistic manner.

### **Cognitive Perspective: Internal and Indigenous**

Scholars of South Asia have to understand the strength of knowledge, values, beliefs and cognitive structure of South Asia and thereby help in shaping not merely inter-state relations but also relations at the level of globality. This would necessitate:

1. Freedom from cognitive-imprisonment of western paradigm.
2. Freedom from dependence on resources both material and non-material on the West.
3. Commitment to study the classical texts de-novo and to deconstruct colonial history.
4. To grasp and to identify the core values and norms

which form the centrality of society. The folk traditions of oral literature, aesthetics, craft and understanding the institutions which have maintained the unity and harmony of society.

5. Recognition of indigenous conceptual categories, their articulation and refinement.
6. Viewing knowledge in the context of space and time—a recognized category in the cognitive-classes in South Asia.
7. Understanding region holistically and as a compact historical civilizational entity, which has processually created structures which have been formed and reformed.

The centrality of the thesis of this chapter rejects, negates and makes conscious the intellectuals of the imperialistic knowledge which denigrates the South Asian region and divides it as the political units within a civilization whole.

Incidentally, the postmodernism as a western theoretical paradigm is resolutely contradictory and unavoidably political. Its distinctive character lies in wholesale 'nudging' communal, its distinctive character lies in wholesale 'nudging' commitment to doubleness, or duplicity.<sup>10</sup> Postmodern's initial concern has been to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life, to point out that those entities which we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' are in fact 'cultural' made by us not given to us.<sup>11</sup> Postmodernism works to 'de-doxify' our cultural representations and their understandable political import.<sup>12</sup> The 'discourses' are the inescapably political in content in which the intellectuals work and speak.<sup>13</sup> The dynamic social context reveals the inevitability of the existence of power relations in which social relations operate. The existence and power of representations do not reflect society so much as *grant* meaning and value within a particular society. The postmodern is seemingly not so much a society

as a problematic: a complex of heterogeneous but interrelated questions which will not be silenced by any spuriously *unitary* answer.<sup>14</sup>

Several contradictory formulations of postmodernity abound in academics for both fashionable as well as serious academic reasons. Fastidious academics once shunned the term postmodernism, now it has entered all tendencies in music, art, literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis and social sciences. Despite this there is no clarity in the meaning of the term. What does postmodernity focus on: self-reflexivity or worldliness; representation is reflective or constitutive; historical or parodic.

In philosophical circles, postmodernity has been the term used to situate theoretical positions as apparently diverse as Derrida's challenge to the western metaphysics of presence, Foucault's investigations of the complicities of discourse, knowledge and power; Vattimo's paradoxically potent 'weak thought'; and Lyotard's questioning of the validity of the meta-narratives of legitimation and emancipation.<sup>15</sup>

Postmodernist representation is self-consciously either a image or a narrative, or a product of (and producer of) ideology. Obviously representation itself needs to be representational. Baudrillard argued that today the mass media have neutralized reality by stages: first they *reflected* it; then they *masked* and perverted it; next they had to *mask* its absence; and finally they produced instead the simulacrum of the real, the destruction of meaning and of all relation to reality. Obviously pre-mass media was authentic, media is manipulated. In the post-colonial context or feminist context, how is the other represented in, say imperialist or patriarchal discourse? There are the same familiar totalizing strategies of domination, though usually masked by the liberating rhetoric of First World critics who appropriate Third World cultures to

their own ends.

Thus, representation of postmodernism itself becomes problematic. The crucial point arising out of these discussions is to realize that conceptual categories of postmodernism should be viewed in the context of historicity and intellectual legacy of South Asia so that the meaningful categories emerge from within and not without. It is essentially not so much a question of organic ties of intellectuals with family, community or country but a conscious attempt to free one from the academic colonialism and intellectual imperialism. Back home, ever since Indira Gandhi, egged on by the 'progressive' pro-Soviet lobby, identified the irresistible charms of co-option, the Indian intellectuals have become of excellence' may not be noted for the quality of their output, but they have certainly succeeded in trying the bulk of India's intellectuals to the apron strings of the state, and by logical extension, the government. Little wonder that the limited instances of intellectual subversion and challenges to the *status quo* have by and large emanated from individuals who are located outside the pole of official patronage.<sup>18</sup>

Patronage by the U.S., Germany, France, and the U.K. is more attractive than the local ones. Number of visits abroad and conferences in West bring academic prestige and there is ignoble canvassing for such strivings. Lot of scholars from West come to South Asia to study the region but hardly anyone from South Asia goes abroad to study their societies. The cognitive consequences of such personalized approach to intellectual endeavour brings more slavery than liberation. In a recent article, Dileep Padgaonkar suggests that having failed times without number to change the world, the Leftist intellectual in France has settled down to the task of interpreting it. Faced with the possibility of elimination, the

Left-wingers have moved from "Marx, Mao and Mandela to management, marketing and media." The Left is new in the forefront of the globalization drive as it holds forth in glowing terms about the promise and potential of monetarism. On the other hand, it is the Right which evokes the spirit of nationalism, the need for populism, the defence of the public interest and so on.

The French scholars are shifting and also not shifting. Some have chosen areas which have nothing to do with politics. Levi-Strauss is currently finishing a book on photography; the philosopher Pierre Levy has been making important contribution in the area of artificial intelligence; and Paul Ricoeur will shortly publish work related to idea of justice and nature of the act of exercising judgment.

However, not all of them have abandoned the public domain. The philosopher like Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida will shortly publish books analyzing the "death of Marx". Lyotard is working on a book entitled "Postmodernist Moralities". Rodinson has announced the completion of a major work devoted to contemporary issues faced by Muslim societies. Bourdieu has written two monumental works on state and anthropological foundation of economy. Furet is preparing a major study on communism in the twentieth century.

The role of intellectuals as political activists has changed. The role of media is being attacked rather than American capitalism or Latin American dictators hips.

Debray has critically appraised the pitfalls of modern democracy. Voices are being raised against new orthodoxies, which have replaced the old ones. From Voltaire's days, the French intellectual has moved from humanist and rationalist commitment to political ones. Today he is once again making links between the specific and the universal, the concrete and

the abstract, the sensuous and the moral. He thus remains sceptical of the role of religion in public life but is willing to grant that individuals and communities can and do resort to religion for comfort, especially in moments of crisis. He is contemptuous of ideologies which promise redemption on earth but is at the same time horrified by valueless pragmatism. He favours market mechanisms but is distrustful of any move which seeks to reduce the individual to a homo economicus.

The above gist of Padgaonkar's views reveals the drift, uncertainty, contradiction, confusion and inability to comprehend and establish fundamental assumptions, beliefs and truths regarding mundane, cosmic and transcendental reality. Creativity based on surface, superficial and sensory outer-directed experiences are different from deeper intuitive inner-directed experiences. The latter is classical oriental tradition. The intellectual classical traditions of Indian sub-continent have sought fundamental truths in diverse areas.

The issue in a wider perspective is to study and understand the classical tradition of Indian sub-continent so that the academic colonialism and imperialism can be met with cognitively. This would inculcate greater self-confidence and ability for selective assimilation, acceptance and critical appraisal of western thought and western structural and cultural format in economic, social and political organization.

The cognitive tradition of Asia does not discard diverse ways of thinking nor it has been against exogenous changes. It has modified its thought system in accordance with space and time but there is composite culture which has created the process of diversity and which in turn creates its composite format. This mutuality is not merely in concrete material representations but also social formations and cognitive abstractions.

The intellectual milieu of South Asian region has to be made sensitive to this potential, possibility and power of knowledge.

### Notes

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## Chapter IV

### **POSITIVISM, IDEALISM AND REALISM: META-THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS**

The understanding of South Asia has several theoretical alternatives. Scholars are always involved in various modes of interpretations of our notions of 'truths' which are conditioned by the cultures to which we belong and the historical circumstances in which we find ourselves. Hence, we have to face the fact of our finitude and the utterly contingent character of our efforts to understand. Hermeneutics has its origin in the nineteenth century for attempts to formulate a theory of interpretation. Dilthey had raised some basic questions in this regard: What were the methods that would permit an objective reading of symbolic structures of any kind, including actions, social practices, norms and values? How could the understanding of meaning be raised to the same level of methodological clarity that characterized the natural sciences?

The theoretical approaches in social sciences have been dominated by the positivistic epistemology. However, there has been significant counter-academic culture of

positivism in the last few decades. The co-existence of several research traditions within the same intellectual milieu is a normal 'feature of sciences'.<sup>2</sup>

The cognitive pluralism in theoretical orientation in social sciences reveals its maturity on the one hand and ongoing search for understanding of phenomena on the other. The rigour of search is important, so also the intensity of quest for comprehension. The various diverse ways to understand and interpret reality can be categorized into three meta-theories; these meta-theories provide basis for formulation of specific theories. These are positivism, idealism and realism.

### Positivism

Positivism defines the social world as resembling in structures and process the natural world and accepts the method of natural sciences in the study of social sciences. Idealism defines social reality as an aspect of consciousness to be analyzed in terms of ideas, thoughts and feelings. Realism gives ontological priority to the subterranean dimension of invisible but real structures and assigns to social sciences the task of uncovering these structures and specifying their effects.

Positivism believes that there are no fundamental differences between the natural and social sciences. The aim of social sciences should be to formulate principles that have the same objective status as natural sciences. These principles are the means of explaining societal events or phenomena. The social reality is made known through concepts which refer to what is observable, measurable and quantifiable. It is necessary to construct scientific terminology in place of everyday language.

The everyday language has possibility of variant and contextual meaning. It lacks exactness and brevity of communication.

munication and meaning. The literary style makes language imaginatively rich, aesthetically pleasant and subjectively-emotively satisfying. Since scientific terminology aims at exactitude of meaning, at certain level of abstraction and also necessitate neologism for communication of specific ideas and thoughts, the conceptual articulation in science is characterized by brevity, exactness, specificity and universality of meanings. The use of everyday words like personality, society, culture, community, ethnicity, religion, conflict, co-operation, socialization are used in more than one sense. These words are converted into terms and concepts, so that their meanings become specific, clear, unambiguous and general. Science necessitates formulation, construction and use of these concepts for study, research and communication at the level of sharedness of thoughts amongst scientific community.

Further science is concerned with what is and how it came to be. It is not concerned with what ought to be.<sup>3</sup> Science assumes uniformity of truth (under same conditions same things will happen), objectivity of truth (the phenomenal world remains same, irrespective of who observes it), and empirical evidence. The science as a method of inquiry is objective, empirical, value-free, theoretical, cumulative, abstract, and universalistic.

Thus, the scientific knowledge is collected and organized in accordance with certain cognitive norms. These norms are: (a) empirical validity, (b) logical clarity, (c) logical consistency of propositions, and (d) generality of principles (Parsons). In other words, science, which is value-free, has its own value system. Thus, scientific ethos is characterized by the values of (a) universalism, (b) organized scepticism, (c) communality (sharing of findings with others), (d) ethical neutrality, and (e) disinterestedness (Merton).

The positivistic attitude in social sciences comprises following connected suppositions: (1) That the methodology of natural sciences may be directly adopted to social sciences. (2) That the goal of social sciences is to formulate 'laws' or 'law-like' generalizations similar to natural sciences. (3) That the social sciences are 'neutral' in respect of values.

Social conduct is not totally free. It is determined by past experiences, situational influences and personality dispositions. The South Asian Studies in most cases have laid emphasis on contemporary scene and issues. These studies have relied more on secondary sources for understanding the region or its parts. Newspapers, reports, journals, books, documents have been used as source material for the cognitive analysis of the region. There is difference between construction of reality through these sources and through direct, continuous process of empirical inquiry. The newspapers are concerned with immediate, they are further concerned with news-worthy issues. The collection of facts by them is again 'quickie'. The newspapers are controlled by certain interest groups—be that government, political parties or business houses.

For serious and meaningful research, therefore, studies on South Asia should also undertake studies based on primary data collection. This would necessitate observation of situations, interviewing people, getting on the spot facts, not in hurry but in a systematic way, over a period sufficient enough to help understand reality.

The primary data is significant in understanding the reality in a coherent, systematic way so that organized analysis becomes possible. It substitutes arm-chair philosophizing, speculative understanding and wild imagination by coherent, fact-based interpretation.

Secondly, the themes of South Asian Studies have been

largely political power, political relationships, government, and policies of government. The generality of culture, social structure, people's views and perception, the cultural influences, the styles of life, the commonalty of heritage, need to be empirically analyzed. There is a need for paradigm-shift, both thematically and methodologically.

Such a paradigm shift is possible through inter-disciplinary training in courses and researches in South Asian Studies, through identification of innovative and people oriented themes and by motivating scholars to undertake team research. Scholars can academically internalize trans-disciplinary inputs, ethos and perspective so that an integrated approach can be used in researches.

### **Idealism**

The idealists contend that social scientists should be less concerned with the search for universal laws of behaviour and the construction of law like explanations and ought to focus on understanding the meaning of people's action. Explanations consists of giving reasons and motives rather than universal laws.<sup>5</sup> The social reality is cognitive: it consists of ideas, thoughts and other contents of consciousness. The social world is not a natural world upon which experiments can be performed, rather a text which must be read and interpreted. Actors are not objects but interpretators. Actions are accounted for not by treating them as objects but by learning what the world means to them and what they are trying to create.<sup>6</sup> The action is understood from within, hence the method is interpretive. Ideas and symbols have meaning and are powerful instruments to define situations and actions of people. The idealist approach is different in understanding any human encounter. The positivist views encounter from the perspective of structure—normative expectations of roles.

Social forces operate to shape people's conduct. If roles are seen as *ideas* and not *things*, the focus is on the processual dimension of encounter, wherein the encounter between people is negotiated. It is constantly in flux. Organizational chart would not help to understand actions of people placed at different levels of positional hierarchy. The mechanical notion is replaced by the actual processual dimension of negotiated behaviour which would vary according to specificity of situation and personalities involved. Thus, the human world is a world of meaning. The individual does not confront the reality directly, but always through the use of interpretative schema. The dominant influences on idealist social science meta-theory has been those of Max Weber, Simmel, Husserl and Mead. Weber aimed at interpretive understanding. Simmel defined the subject matter of social sciences as the forms of thought which people organize out of their experience and in terms of which they confront their environment. Husserl abandoned all ideas of what was real and concerned himself entirely with how the universe of phenomenal appearances is constructed. Mead discarded the dichotomy of object and subject and saw it as part of single and continuous process. The specific theoretical approaches like phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism have their roots of origin in the writings of idealist thinkers.

man and the creator of man. For Husserl, mind is not the passive recipient of impressions from the outside world, but is an active process. World is what we perceive. What is the meaning of political categories like India and Pakistan, male and female, war and terrorism? What techniques are used to construct and sustain these meanings?

Man is an active creator of his world in idealist meta-theory in social sciences. Social reality is always the outcome of sustained interpretive efforts on the part of actors. Society is real (has objective facticity) because its members define it as real and orient themselves toward the reality so defined.<sup>7</sup> Such an approach negates quantification. Statistics conceal meaning, divorce statistics conceal the meaning of the end of marriage. Each encounter is an innovative accomplishment, or reaccomplishment—"another first time."<sup>8</sup> The subject matter is meanings, and meanings might well be ambiguous, shifting and uncertain.

The meanings and symbols have greater degree of commonality so far people's life is concerned in the region. The process of giving meaning also reveals similarity. However, when it comes to giving meanings to dimensions which are political and inter-state hostility, the meanings and symbols are constructed by the power that be—and communicated through policy utterances and mass media to make them part of cognitive experience of common man. This definition of reality becomes real in consequences as far as meanings are concerned.

This meta-theory view is significant to understand the way in which meanings have been given and are being given to the history, polity, culture and society by different people placed at different levels of hierarchy in the region. The political meaning to Kashmir is being constantly constructed and reconstructed by states, politicians, people, media and its im-





## Realism

Realists transcend the determinism of the positivism and voluntarism of the idealists. They take from the positivists the idea that people cannot create society as they wish but must obey certain social imperatives. They take from the idealists the notion that society is the creation of human beings, and unlike the world of matter and energy, can be changed by them. They see society as both the ever-present condition and the continually produced outcome of human agency. In their conscious activity, people unconsciously reproduce the social structure which seems to govern them.<sup>10</sup> The subterranean invisible dimensions of reality are unearthed through this approach. Thus, there are layers of reality.

This world-view is important in the sense that it gives a different insight and emphasizes the need to unearth the hidden dimensions of reality. The facade is to be removed and the various forces which mystifies the reality or lead to construction of false reality need to be uncovered. Communal tensions may really be not the consequence of religion but economic forces and vested interests could be responsible for the communal violence.

Disputes over territory may be made up, and made visible to overcome political weak position of governments in power. Developmental programmes may help the interests of powerful nations of the world outside South Asia. Population issue has been made to look problematic as large population—sheer number is a threat to developed powerful nations. Policy of liberalization is part of international conspiracy to induce consumerism. Wars are manipulatively initiated to sale arms. Things are not what they look like, is the first premise of realism.

These three para-theories raise variety of dichotomous theoretical dilemmas: (1) The problem of demarcation—



ings are retrospective. It involves retroactive realignment of the past.<sup>11</sup>

It is the outcome of a narrative structure imposed upon events from a position subsequent to them, in light of events that have been seen to come after them. Historical meaning of Mohanjadaro for historians of India and Pakistan take different dimensions. So also the phenomena of partition, the Moghul rule and other historical events. History in certain sense is found to be rewritten with different interpretations. We will always understand historical narratives and interpretations both from a wider perspective than our predecessors could possess, and from a narrow one than our heirs will acquire.

The comparative approach is both spatial and temporal and helps in dealing with similarities and dissimilarities in the structural, cultural, economic, political and psychological aspects of people and the power who govern.

The normative approach helps in providing framework for the use of knowledge in policy formulation, social reconstruction and development. The ethno-social science approach focuses on construction of conceptual categories and theoretical approaches which would be in consonance with the specificity and distinctiveness of structural and cultural realities of South Asian region.

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## Chapter V

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEM**

#### **The Structural Theory**

The structural theory in the study of South Asia emphasizes orderly arrangement of parts. The relationship between parts helps in understanding the whole. Structure assumes logical priority over the parts that comprise it. From a varied set of political encounters we might abstract the structure we call friendship or animosity between nation-states. The pattern arising out of regularity of such a relationship makes the abstract structure. The relationships between states of South Asia are clearly visible, pronounced and articulated. They reveal a pattern and also repetitiveness.

There are several meanings and usage of the concept of structure in social sciences. Structure, as a 'location', refers to categorical differences within aggregates-social categories into which population or states are divided. The demographic structure categorizes people on the basis of gender, age, density of population, birth and death rates, size of family, and growth of population. Such structure of demography is

cial, political and economic consequences both for the region and states separately.

Similarly, the stratificational dimensions of society can be examined in terms of caste, class, social mobility, endogamy and other related aspects of hierarchy, inequality and social distance. Structure, seen as role relationship, is perceived in terms of behaviour of unit in relation to other unit and units. The role-set of South Asian countries reveals the patterns of interaction arising out of specific roles played by each state with other in different spheres of activities. The role-set of a state changes in accordance with the dynamics of political changes. Structural social scientists believe that people's consciousness—their attitudes and beliefs—tend to follow from the role they play.

The notion of structure as an organization relates to the distinction between social-political relationship between actors and structural relationship between dimensions of an organization. This makes sense of argument that relations are defined in terms of organization.

The notion of structure as a network focuses not on one set of relationship but whole network of relationship between regions. There are many types of relationship which operate between different units of regions. The network reveals the multiplicity of such relationships leading to creation of a network. Network structures consist of ties between positions or activities. SAARC members reveal network of relationships. The greater the network of activities shared, the denser the network.

The connections between some parts of the networks could be denser than others. Functional analysis focuses on the contribution an activity makes to the total set of activities of which it is a part. The activity persists because it is necessary for the survival of the whole. Institution of army survives,

as it is capable of maintaining territorial integrity. Institution of marriage ensures orderly procreation and child rearing and thus ensures the survival of society from one generation to another.

Functional analysis shares with structural social science the assumption that society is not merely an aggregate of discrete individuals. Rather, it has a structure of its own just as an organism has a structure. The difference lies in the priority functionalists give to the needs of society when explaining structures. The impact of a structure (that is, its ability to control and motivate behaviour) is related to the functions it serves.

The political structure of South Asian countries create structure of values and attitudes which breed hatred and animosity between them. The visible, controlled and manipulative structure, which is handled by the governmental power, relegates the importance and influence of other structures which reveal commonalty of culture and institutions at the level of generality of people.

The supremacy of political power and its sway over generality of people has negated the commonalty of generalized cultural and social system. Studies in this area can cognitively help in strengthening the ties at the level of people and thus can positively weaken the political supremacy of divisiveness which makes South Asia as a region more and more vulnerable to the influence of nations of centre.

The states of South Asia have not visibly or strongly united against any one state of the region. India has had problems with its neighbours due to historical colonial legacy as well as its size and locational centrality. However, despite uneasy or hostile relations, there has not been combined unionism against India by its neighbours.

On the other hand, India does not have strong supporter

amongst its neighbours. There is undeclared-declared neutrality towards India, when it comes to hostility of India with state other than itself. Such a regional political reality obviously makes the entire region subservient to nations of centre, especially the United States.

The notions of functional pre-requisites and functional equivalence further clear the meaning of functional approach. Language is functional pre-requisite for effective communication, family for legitimacy of children and their upbringing, population control for achieving developmental goals, literacy for elimination of dogma and superstition and building awareness. Functional equivalence suggests that the responsibility for important function passes from one structure to another. Modern legal system is substitute for the traditional panchayat system and bureaucracy based on Weberian ideal-typical characteristics, replaces the patrimonial-par-ticularistic administrative system of the past.

How functional the implanted alien structures are to the region is an issue which necessitates deeper probe and analysis in the context of historicity, culture and society of the region.

Functionalism has influenced every discipline in social sciences. Its distinguishing properties are found to be in its concern with 'relations' and 'activities' rather than substances. Characteristic notions identifying functionalism are: transformation, dynamic patterns and processes, growth, expansion, and emergence. Activity produces a form, is the continuation of functionalism. This form arises out of the uses for which it is intended and re-enforces those uses.

The term 'function' has been used in various ways. But essentially it means appropriate activity and system determined and system determining activity. According to Davis, functionalism is most commonly said to do two things: to re-



late to the parts of society to the whole, and to relate one part to another.<sup>1</sup>

Merton brings out distinction between five different meanings of function: (a) function as public occasion or gathering, (b) function as occupation, (c) function as activities assigned to the incumbent of a social status, (d) mathematical function, and (e) function as social procedures which help maintain the system.<sup>2</sup> It is the last meaning which is relevant in social sciences. Social functions have objective observable consequences. Merton denies that the functional analysis is 'ideological'. According to him, functional analysis pertains to standardized dimensions of activities, such as roles, institutions, social norms, social organizations etc.

Merton distinguishes between manifest functions and latent functions. The manifest functions relate to objective consequences contributing to the adaptation or adjustment of the system. They are intended and recognized. The latent functions are consequences which are neither intended nor recognized. They are however observable consequences. An item may be functional in a society; a given item may be functional for some units and dysfunctional for others. Dysfunction implies, disintegrative consequences of any activity for the system.<sup>3</sup>

Merton's study of "Social Structure and Anomie" is a very apt example of functional analysis. In this study, he has examined as to how social structure exerts pressure upon certain persons in society for non-conformist behaviour. Culture inculcates goals to be pursued, while means are institutionally provided, for the realization of such goals. When there is too much emphasis on cultural goals but no corresponding emphasis on institutional means, 'anomie' develops. The typology given by Merton is as under:



cluding not only physics and biology but political science and sociology as well. However, there are dozens of system theories in social sciences.<sup>7</sup> Some of these theories employ 'mechanical model' while others 'organic model', 'process model' etc. In the mechanical model, the parts are simple, relations restricted and unchanging. The system is closed and internally generated tensions or strains are not taken care of. In the organic model, the parts are complex having their own organization, relations are fluid, the system is open and internally generated strains, seen as occasional disturbances, are taken care of. In the process model, the parts are conceived of as events, the relations consist of flows of information, the system is open and the possibility of internally generated strain is chronic.<sup>8</sup>

Parsons' functional theory<sup>9</sup> was elaborated in his work on social system. Social system is conceived as a whole composed of a plurality of interacting persons, motivated for optimization of gratification and whose relations to their situations, and each other, are defined and mediated in terms of culturally structured and shared symbols.<sup>10</sup> The social action gets structured through interlinkages of social system, personality system and cultural system.

The action system of the individual has two dimensions: gratificational and orientational. The gratificational dimension is emotive-affective or 'cathectic', while the orientational is 'cognitive'. The human action is based on both informational-knowledge and affective desires. An action chooses between different alternatives. The process of selection is evaluation. The processual dimension of action is normatively regulated.

When the elements consisting of duration, sufficiently long to transcend the life span of individuals, recruitment through biological reproduction or migration, socialization of the on-

coming generation and basic self-sufficiency are added to the social system, society as a category emerges. Thus, society is a large scale, persistent, self-sufficient system of social interaction which trains its members. The basic unit of Parsons' analysis is society. The society in terms of relations between the actors represents its structure. The participation by an actor in the system depends upon his locational status. The actor has variety of statuses and roles. The status-set (Merton) is the sum total of statuses of an actor which he possesses either through ascription or achievement. The role-set (Merton) is the relational reference towards which a particular role is oriented. An actor is a father, brother, doctor, customer etc. in different situations, and the aggregate of these all is the status-set. On the other hand, an actor, in his role performance as a doctor, comes in relational contact with nurse, patient, wardboy, other doctors, and this network of relational area of a particular role is the role-set of the actor. Status sequence is the sequential status change, status mobility of an actor from one position to another. The change in status from assistant professor to associate professor to professor is an example of status sequence.

An action system has motivational and symbolic elements which build an order in the system. This order is normatively regulated. The norms are necessary for role performance and govern relationships of actor with others in complementary of roles. The normative ordering of need satisfaction is the basic phenomenon of the dynamics of social system.

Parsons' significant contribution lies in his conception of 'pattern variables'. In any given action, actor aims at various realization of gratification. However, one cannot get everything. One likes certain things more than others. Certain things do not require emotionality while certain others do. The affectivity-oriented relationships are based on aim to satisfy

between ego and alter. These relationships are normatively defined and are institutionalized in the society. However, the actual processual dimension of relationship varies in terms of nature and degree of a particular variable in the choice made by the actor. The choice is made on the basis of the personality system of the actor. Secondly, the individual faces a choice of pursuing interests private to himself or shared with others. The first alternative is known as self-orientation and the second is collectivity orientation. Thirdly, the given action may be determined by ideas or feelings. The primacy of rational-cognitive values imply universalistic standard of role expectation while that of appreciative values implies a particularistic standard. Fourthly, the action may take into consideration the ascriptive aspects or achievemental aspects of the situation. The fifth pattern variable refers to the scope of definition of relationship. It could be specific or diffused.<sup>11</sup>

Parsons' scheme<sup>12</sup> has been summarized as under:

- I. The fundamental elements of actions are conceived to be ideas, desires and values (cathectic, cognitive and evaluative orientation).
- II. Action as a system incorporates three sub-systems: personality, social system and cultural system.
- III. A social system, if it is total rather than partial, is a society.
  - (a) It is a large scale, persistent, independent system of social action.
  - (b) The primary units into which it is analyzed are role-statutes: positions plus the activities appropriate to them.
  - (c) The functional pre-requisites of a society are those minimum requirements with respect to individuals, social systems and culture without which the society could not exist.



(the polity) which organizes the system for the purposes of reaching its goals, an integrative sub-system (the societal community) which promotes solidarity and a pattern-maintenance sub-system (the fiduciary) which conserves and perpetuates meaning.<sup>13</sup>

The South Asia as a region has characteristics of system. The conceptual construct of South Asian system necessitates abstraction of characteristics which reveal dynamics of linkages and commonalty of pattern beyond political boundaries. The commonalty exists in cultural, ecological, demographic, developmental, ethnic, and linguistic aspects of the region. However, the interaction between parts is neither direct nor visible—in fact political processes delink them. The historicity binds them, the polity creates distance. The overemphasis on state building has led to increase in the regulative and extractive capabilities of the political system and with the development of centralized and penetrative bureaucracy related to the increase in these capabilities, and sponsored hatred between states of the region coupled with interest of super powers the cleavages have been further heightened and perpetuated between them.

States of the region experience intra-terrorist pressures. These pressures have external support. Thus, South Asia as a live political system, is characterized by relationships of state while other systems, namely, cultural, social, ecological remain dormant due to their non inter-state interactions. The potential of South Asia as a civilization area can be actualized through redefinition of their political relationship, which can be cognitively constructed and politically emancipated so as to develop holistically.

## Reconstruction of Structural and System Theory Perspective

The scholars of South Asia can contribute significantly by focusing on the historicity of the region, commonality of institutions, culture and problems and thereby perceive the region as having common ethos and aspirations, commonality of styles of life and natural and human resources. Historical memories can be used for bonds of positive relationship, rather than conflicts and suspicion. In an article entitled "Understanding South Asia: A Super-structural Analysis", Chaube suggests that macro-level study of politics has two dimensions: civilizational and cultural.<sup>14</sup> Civilization covers the length and breadth, culture imparts depth to a society.<sup>15</sup> Civilization has been considered as a time-bound concept, while culture is time-less. The civilizational approach is synthetic and it helps to understand the totality of the life of the people. The cultural approach is eclectic and useful for the comparative study of recurrent traits in social life.

The states in the region are geographically compact and have created a civilizational entity through historical legacies. Yet, at different points of time, the political communities have created cleavages through statehood and shifting boundaries. The civilizational sway and cultural unity made polity and statehood fluid and gave them subordinated status. Thus, traditionally, the idea of civilizational centrality was important for people while the notion of state was constantly in flux. Polity was centralized and continuous battles made territoriality a shifting phenomenon. Absence of a strong centralized authority led to the growth of sub-regional political pluralities. Distinctions in food, clothing, language and customs led to sub-cultural formations with a broad homogeneous civilizational umbrella.

Migration of people spreaded elements of culture from



one sub-region to another. The process of acculturation led to diversities and unity in a creative way. The impact of colonialism was witnessed in technology, economy and bureaucracy, ultimately leading to creation of new institutions and new ethos of westernism. The railways facilitated the mobility of people. Traditional crafts and industries were replaced by machines. English language education led to formation of an elite class communicating across the region. This class adapted western styles of life and became dominant through its facile entry into many sectors of significance.

The partition of British India was a political strategy by colonial power having social, economic and psychic consequences. Colonialism not only led to political subjugation but also economic exploitation, collective shame and cowardice. It led to demolition of certain effective aspects of traditional institutions and worst of all created deeper divisions based on religion, language and ethnicity.

The crucial issue is to construct the structural and cultural elements of South Asia and to view them in dialectical relationship with state policy.

In the changing scenario at the world level, the territories shall lose their significance in the wider context of need for contact, communication, economy and movement. The South Asia region in postmodernity might revert back to its traditional format selectively. Postmodernism focuses on feelings in place of rationality, on humanism instead of scienticism, co-operation as opposed to conflict, and holism against specialization.

Traditional civilization emerged creatively and have had strong elements of humanism. It prevented alienation, dehumanization and relied crucially on primordiality and transcendence. The deeper meanings of life were sought in place of immediate and material. Collectivity and communal-

ty, despite variations, were emphasized in place of individualism and self-orientation. Ignoble politics encourages conflicts both covertly and overtly. Forces of political conflicts are atomic, invisible, manipulative, hence can subordinate structure of culture and its ethos. Humanistic approach in South Asia Studies could cognitively and intellectually generate ideas and opinions for reinterpretation of South Asian region as a holistic category based on pluralism, primordiality, catholicity and particularistic-affectivity.

### Notes

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## Chapter VI

# THE PROCESSUAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

### **Ethnomethodological Perspective**

The structural and systems theories lay emphasis on the pattern of relationship between different parts. These recognize the normative paradigm. The ethnomethodological perspective focuses on the interpretive paradigm and emphasizes the processual dimensions of activities and events. According to Gidlow, ethnomethodology is concerned with how man in society organizes his daily life, and above all, how he makes these activities accountable to himself, significant to others and outsiders.<sup>1</sup> This perspective is concerned with (a) the activities of everyday life, (b) the language and its meaning, and (c) the normative aspects of situation and the way people use norms in their actions.

The ethnomethodological approach focuses on the processual aspect of activities and actions. It is the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life.<sup>2</sup> The



- (3) Rational accountability
- (4) Practical sociological reasoning
- (5) Glossing practices

Indexicality refers to the contextual determination of social events and contextual determination of meaning. The meanings are dependent on the linguistic context, i.e., the contextual meaning of the language. The objective expression of the language is determined by the generality of common meaning of language which is same to everyone and conveys meaning independent of the context and actors who use the language.

Practical contexts are non-linguistic. They consist of time, place and knowledge about them. The distinctiveness of the context provides specific meaning of the situation, which is different from the generalized meaning. Thus, indexical expressions are those whose sense cannot be decided by an auditor without his necessary knowing or assuming something about the biography and the purpose of the user of the expression, the circumstances of the utterance, the previous course of the conversation, or the particular relationship of actual or potential interaction that exists between the expressor and the auditor.

The biographical context of the actor is yet another aspect of indexicality. It is associated with the personality of the actor and conveys specific personality-referential meanings. If one knows the person, one can grasp the truth value, the meaning structure and the motivational aspects of expressions of the actor.

Practical reasoning impresses upon the need of using the reasoning of people, who continuously interpret their actions and others actions in different situations. However, the interpretations in social sciences are based on higher level of abstraction. They tend to be classified, organized and are

devoid of the element of personal gratification of situational actor alter syndrome.

Reflexivity helps in self feedback and in adopting a consistent view of events. It helps in reconstruction of event through coherent and sequential playback and playforth. Through this process, meanings are understood, constructed and interpreted. Rational accountability is the observable and reportable aspect of event. Out of innumerable elements and cues in an event, selectively only relevant are taken for meaningful interpretation. This helps in systematic construction and is delivered as a package.

The glossing practices are used to take into account the abbreviated, omitted aspects of certain facts. Members use glossing practices in their everyday activities wherein meanings are inherently clear but objectively not made apparent.

The surface rules (norms) are converted into practical processually actual behaviour. In certain sense there is intuitive orientation in area of inquiry. The interpretive procedures are invariant properties of everyday practical reasoning, necessary for assigning sense to the substantive procedures, which are known as norms, rules, formal utterances, and ceremonial-ritualistic aspects of conduct. According to the normative paradigm, interaction between individuals is subject to the role expectation of their respective statuses. It is assumed that interactions are governed by given rules. This assumption leads to another assumption that within identifiable subgroups, the actors discriminate situations and actions in nearly the same way. In normative paradigm, a socially shared system of symbols and meanings is always present. This assumption of shared definitive meaning is questioned by interpretive paradigm. The meaning of a particular role or role expectation is taken as problematic for the actor and for the observer. There is a mutual process of defining role



redefining the situations and thus structure emerges out of definitions and redefinitions given by actor, group or unit which is involved in a situation.

The ethnomethodologists are critical of positivistic social science for imitating the methods of natural sciences. Social world is constituted by an intrinsic relevance structure, whereas the world of natural science does not have intrinsic relevance structure. They emphasize the value of simple description as a source of social science knowledge. This description method is empirical but not scientific. The task of social science is to describe how the array called society is assembled out of what members do and not out of causes and effects of what they do.

Observation becomes a reliable and important tool for ethnomethodologists. This approach emphasizes direct methods for comprehension of reality. This method also rely on over-hear technique, recorded material such as diaries, letters, tapes, etc., in which people's behaviour is revealed in its natural spontaneous and real form.

The ethnomethodologists also employ documentary method and laboratory experiments. The documentary method involves search for an identical homologous pattern underlying a vast variety of totally different realization of meaning. Experimental studies in this approach were conducted by Garfinkel. He asked his students to behave as strangers in their homes, to bargain in shops which have fixed prices. This was done to disrupt the accepted settings and then observe the consequences.

The ethnomethodologists accuse the conventional social science for conceptual reification, of committing the fallacy of 'misplaced concreteness'. The conventional social science treats all social phenomena as things. They treat roles as things, whereas roles cannot be perceived as thi

The ethnomethodologists also charge the conventional sociology for committing the fallacy of 'misplaced abstraction'. This means that you can know in a more abstract form what you do not know in a particular form. Parsons' theory of action is criticized for its abstractionism. It is too abstract to explain concrete social action at empirical level. Thus, ethnomethodology is lumped together with so-called humanistic social sciences or what is known as creative social sciences. There are basically two assumptions in this approach: The first is that human beings are not merely acted upon by social facts or social forces, but are constantly shaping and creating their own social worlds in interaction with each other. Secondly, special methods are required to study and understanding of these uniquely human processes. They are part of subjectivist tradition of social inquiry in contrast to the objectivist or positivistic tradition.

Thus, ethnomethodology views a man as a creator of meaning. It has distrust for quantification; it is a powerful tool of demystification and believes that social reality is constructed out of negotiated encounter with others.

The study of South Asian region can be seen at multiple micro-levels of negotiated reality. The processual dimensions of polity, economy and culture of the region can provide a significant breakthrough in understanding the reality as it has been changing, emerging and being constructed. The process of westernization, modernization, development and the dynamics of political changes, can be better understood through the approach of ethnomethodology as it would reveal in greater depth and meaningfully the reality of the region at different levels as well as in its diversity.

The process through which social, political and cultural realities are constructed is important. Social structures are constructed and reconstructed; they are always in flux.

Thus, as a theoretical approach, it seeks to analyze the contextual dimension of any event, activity, decision. This indexicality is not merely situational but also biographical. For example, biographical context of Nehru and his personality were important factors in the formation of policy for developing nations.

The foreign policies of states are determined by situational factors. There are no permanent friends nor permanent enemies in foreign relations.

Understanding commonness of the activities of people of South Asian region, contextual dimensions of state actions and the processuality of governmental functioning along with the dynamics of culture and economy of the region can meaningfully reveal the reality of region.

### **Symbolic Interactionist Perspective**

The term 'symbolic interaction' was coined by Herbert Blumer<sup>3</sup> in 1937 to denote the approach represented by Cooley, Park, Burgess, Znaniecki, William James, Dewey and Herbert Mead. In any situation actors do not merely react to each other but interpret and define each other's actions. Human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols.

The human being has 'self', which develops in the process of socialization. 'Self' implies ego, awareness and organism. This enables him to make himself the object of his own actions, or act toward himself as he might act towards others. Thus, the 'self' is both a subject and object. This fundamentally differentiates man from other animals.

One becomes many selves. One takes into account of the specific other, to whom one is relating and speaks and acts accordingly. The self is therefore no static structure; it is a dynamic aspect of the interaction process. However, it is true that every one has some degree of consistency in their

ly stable configuration.

The debate over 'I' and 'me' by Mead reveals the need for differentiating the two. The most important implication of the 'I' is that men can never be wholly passive or totally socialized. The 'I' changes the world. Men reconstruct the world in limited sense even as they act in and upon it; for, in every act there is an element of originality. 'Me' is social, 'I' is inner-real. 'Me' is in certain sense a censor, normative, shaped and regulated.

The little children play at being a parent, a teacher or a doctor. Through these enactments they learn organized social relationship and build their personalities. The very introduction of organization from outside pre-supposes a lack of organization at this period in the child's experience.

The organised community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called the 'generalized other'. Through this process he takes the attitudes of other human individuals toward himself and toward one another and brings the entire process into his individual experience. This helps in directing his behaviour accordingly. Community thus exercises control over him. In politics, the individual identifies himself with an entire political party and takes the organized attitudes of that entire party toward the rest of the given social community and toward the problems which confront the party within the given social situation.

There are two stages of the development of self. In the first stage, the self is constituted by an organization of the particular attitudes of the individuals in which he participates. In the second stage, he takes the wider group to which he belongs. In certain cases, the individual reflects over the wider society, encompassing the historicity and also futurity and is able to go beyond the immediate, in an innovative way. This is the creative orientation of the individual.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, human group life is essential for the development of self, consciousness and the mind. In asserting that human being has a self, Mead simply meant that the human being is an object to himself. The human being may perceive himself, have conception of himself, communicate with himself and act towards himself. Mead saw the self as a process and not a structure.

Symbolic interaction involves interpretation, and definition or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act. Participants take account of each others ongoing acts. They have to recognize or adjust their own motives, feelings and attitudes; similarly they have to judge the appropriateness of norms, values and group prescriptions for the situation being formed by the acts of others. Human beings live in a world or environment of objects. An object is anything that can be designated or referred to.

The nature of object is constituted by the meaning it has for the person for whom it is an object. Thus, the meaning is given and is not inherent in the object. Thus, all objects are social products and people act according to the meaning given to these objects by them. Thus, human beings are seen as living in a world of meaningful objects, not in an environment of stimuli or self-constituted entities.

Joint action refers to larger collective form of action that is constituted by the fitting together of the types of behaviour of the separate participants. A family dinner, a marriage ceremony, a war, a game are illustrations of joint action.

From the methodological perspective, the study of human actions shall have to be made from the perspective of the actor. This approach stands in contrast to the so-called objective approach which has dominated the sociology. The 'objective' approach substitutes the view of the observer in place of actor. Actor acts towards his world on the basis of

how he sees his world and not how it appears to observer. The conception of society, as an established organization, is the structural perception. It uses terms like social system, status, position, norms and shared values. It presumes that human society is structured with regard to: (a) social position occupied by the people in it, and (b) the patterns of behaviour in which they are engaged. It is also presumed that the interlinkages of positions based on norms, is the determinant of social behaviour. Thus, social action falls under the category of conformity or deviance.

Symbolic interactionism sees human society not as an established structure but as people meeting their conditions of life. It was social action not arising out of social structure but as a formation made by human actors; it sees group life not as a release or expression of established structure but as a process of building up social actions; it sees social action as having variant process at the level of actual performance and not as dichotomous alternative between conformity and deviance from the pressures of abstracted structures; and it sees interaction as mediated throughout by interpretations made by people.

Structure is not denied in symbolic interactionism but it is not seen as determinant of behaviour—self-operative social system; but it is important as they enter into the process of interpretation and definition out of which joint actions are formed. Social interaction is interaction between persons, people and not between roles; interpretations have to be made by interacting units and normative expectations do provide a framework. However, the process of interaction itself can create a new format, a new structure. In other words, the structure itself is in flux. Socialization shifts its character from being an effective internalization of norms and values to a cultivated capacity to take the roles of others. Social control becomes a

matter of self-control. Human group is seen always as incomplete and undergoing changes, from situation to situation.<sup>5</sup>

Symbolic interactionism is thus concerned with the process of social interaction itself rather than with the causes and consequences. The meanings of acts of governments, people and events emerge in the process of interaction. If people or government define situations as real, they are real in their consequences. If government of Pakistan defines Kashmir as disputed territory, it becomes so for the people of Pakistan and also for some other nations. The world of reality becomes known in the symbolic form in which it is perceived by them. Flag is symbol, so are rituals. Symbols include not only written and spoken languages but also symbols of appearance, such as gestures, body postures, and manners. Situation is an active process of reality construction. Decor, seating arrangement, and body postures have relevant meaning.

Self-presentation is a performance. The impressions in UN debates are managed. Social-political interaction is a continuous process without clear beginning or end. Structures are continuously changing. Relationship between India and Bangladesh in 1971 and 1993 are not same, so also with Nepal and Sri Lanka. Structure emerges through interaction. There could be pretenses, suspicion, friendship and openness in relationship.

Symbolic interactionism in certain sense is episodic, ahistorical, and non-institutional. Phenomenological perspective rejects the idea of positivist that the social world constitutes an object world divorced from the interpretive procedures of its members. The social world is treated as the product of human thought and activity. It concerns with the ways in which individuals construct in their own consciousness the meaning of things. This approach is highly subjective.

### Historical Perspective

The above approaches emphasize the processual and subjective aspects of socio-political phenomena. The processual dimension becomes relevant in the framework of historical approach. The view of history is again given to diverse interpretations. History may be conceived either as an aggregation of various histories relating to different disciplines and areas, or as an integrated development of a *distinctive* civilization.<sup>6</sup> History can be defined not by its subject matter but perspective and methods. The world which historian studies is not accessible to him in the realm of observation since it is in past and gone. A historian studies what is given to him as documents, archives etc., as it appeared to men in the past or as it is interpreted by them. It is the surviving record of human thought and experience that constitutes the primary evidence for the historian. The historical method reconstructs the time specific world-appearance and its correlative subjectively. It is this interpreted and reconstructed content of past records which may be called historical reality.<sup>7</sup> The historians' method of dealing with records is a complex one in which the strands of criticism, hermeneutic, phenomenology and dialectic are interwoven. Records are examined in terms of their credibility. It seeks to understand the meaning of the record and the voices within it.

The major form of historiography has been that of political events and institutions. Since historian is located in the present, his reconstruction of past bears the stamp of his location in the present.<sup>8</sup> He takes his pre-suppositions from the present. It is in this context that the history written by colonial and imperial power should be deconstructed. All beliefs and values are relative to their historical context.

Evolution of society and culture are seen as process of more rational organization and improvement of values. Such



notions are derivation of the superiority of European civilization over the rest of the world assuming the forms of theories of progress, evolution and development.

Economy, society, polity and culture function as mutually determining forces. As a result what can be seen in the constant process of social and cultural change is process of criss-cross pattern of growth and decline.

Scholarship has become federal, with separate fields and knowledge. History should be interested in words and events equally. In historical interpretations, identity itself has been defined in terms of the interest and perspective of ruling category. The self as 'civilized' and other as 'barbarous' is one such category. The categorization based on skin-colour or race has inbuilt biases of categories. The justification of discrimination becomes possible through the type of categories built. The identities may be constructed and may not have any substantial basis outside the manipulation of perceptions. Nature of changes in identities, as a result of foreign rule in South Asia, is an issue which historically need to be examined in the context of concepts and meanings which have been given by both the colonial rulers as well as colonial scholars. The prejudices are perceived and promoted through creation of categories. The identity of the English 'White' became important mainly during and because of the British empire. Words tend to change historically. Instead of 'colour', 'migrant' 'European'-other terms are substituted for them. New identities are created.<sup>9</sup> In Pakistan and Bangladesh, there are attempts to create Islamic identities, and in India to foster 'Hindutva'. Thus, differences are constructed. Identities are also constructed by communication, language, information and education. Conversion and acculturation are ways of considering the part played by religion and culture.

Historically, intrusions by colonial rule and imported



caste in one form which was in opposition to the reality of caste. It is interesting to note that colonial mis-definition of caste has come to be true in post-colonial era—a case of cognitive self-fulfilling prophesy. Inequality exists everywhere, but caste inequality was seen to be problematic.

It is more important to know and understand the complexities of society through history in different times and places. During the period of European expansion, the British scholars used categories like nations, castes, communities and so on, which were different from indigenous categories.

Explanations were twisted according to political interests. It was in the political interest of British observers to explain high level of mortality in child birth in terms of custom rather than of poor working and living conditions and low incomes.

What can be called distinctively South Asian? Not the perception of colonial powers or British scholars having perspective and ideology of their own. The signature of South Asian society is their own. There was no Hinduism before Europeans defined the term. We have to imagine and construct the past before we name the shared perceptions and experiences of people placed at a particular period of time.

We can not explain unless we take indigenous categories, unless we take into consideration conflict produced out of differences or the consensus resulting from predominant trends in behaviour: together they constitute perpetually unfolding cores of meaning.

The significant point to remember is to become aware of the different perspectives which enter in historical or social science analysis and lead to formulation of distinct imposed categories or to interpretation which is made from the interest-oriented position of dominance. There are layers of representation and plural forms of interpretation. An attempt should be made to logically and factually deny the privileging

of anyone particular core of explanation, i.e., anyone perspective—the dictates of ideology, power, interest or the essentialist assumption that the key to South Asia is religion soaked or hierarchy or hegemonic appropriations. Reductionist conclusions foreclose options and alternatives.

Derrida holds that in the creation of a new reality, no text is, or can be more hegemonic than any other. Thus, there is nothing like ultimate signifier.

The central role which Indo-Persian *tarekhi* enjoyed in the eighteenth century, in the study of Muslim dominated regimes, has been diminished due to studies founded on administrative records, biographies, collection of correspondence and factory records of European trading companies. Historians inculcate values in their statements—values which are convenient to them. The assumptions of medieval historians saw the world as they wanted to their culture or the culture of the upper echelons of the ruling class. These *Bhais* were of the same type who sang the glory of local kings for rewards and recognition. The modern historians should see the context in which these historians were located. Because their assumptions and statements are determined by the context in which they wrote. However, one reinterprets data from the perspective of his location. This perspective is also doing what older historians did. So all histories are part-truth for two reasons. Lack of access to past facts by the present historians or selective use of data which supports historians own preconceived assumption. This is interpretation of data according to one's class, political or ideological position whether past or present.

Thus, there could be several histories of the same phenomenon. Such a plurality gave not only different meanings but also contradictions. If the past historians could be charged of sycophancy, of being eulogiser of powers that be,

the contemporary ones are also charged with enslavement to ideology or of some type of imperialism—cultural, political, economic. Thus, facts do not speak—much less the incomplete, fragmented or distorted facts. Truth becomes contextual or personal, which is made to look real through communication.

The contemporary historians have meta-theory which did not exist in the minds of historians of earlier era. The nineteenth century European time, space and idea did not exist prior to its contemporaneity. The historians' pre-suppositions as 'radical', 'liberal' or 'conservative' are present-day categories, which can be used from the vantage point of present to reconstruct or deconstruct the past.

White offers four types of emplotments for displaying the explanation of what happens in history.<sup>11</sup> He refers to different paradigms of explanation which rest not on different readings of the same set of historical events, but rather upon different notions of the nature of historical reality. The four paradigms are: formist, organicist, mechanistic and contextualist. For the formist, the objects alluded may be either individualities or collectivities, particulars or universals, concrete entities or abstractions. The explanation becomes possible after a set of objects has been identified, its attributes assigned, and label attesting to its particularity attached to it. In the organicist paradigm, the individual entities are set as components in whole that are qualitatively different from the sum of their components. Out of dispersed events, historians depict the integrated phenomenon. They are concerned with the principles that inform about the end towards which historical process is proceeding.

The mechanistic paradigm believes in laws which explain what happens in history. Such laws are universal and make explicit the causality of events. Individual entities are less im-

portant than the class of events. The contextual paradigm preserves the rich texture of individual events and entities in the historical field which is characteristic of the formist mode. But they account for the occurrence of the phenomena and bring out relationship with other events, occurring in their circumambient historical space. The historian explains by discovering and describing the threads, which link the individual or institution to its specious socio-cultural 'present'. There is focus on significant. There is inclination towards synchronic representation of the past, cutting across the 'grain of time'. This leads to 'cutting up' history into episodes and epochs within a chronological framework. Episodes focus on the processual dimensions of unfolding of events in a sequential-meaningful manner while epoch is temporal classification, cutting through a major break-up, leading to difference.

However, Hayden White suggests that before any mode of paradigm of interpretation is used, it is necessary to first *pre-figure* the field. This would imply that the historian has to construct linguistic protocol through which the field and its elements are constructed in his terms and not as they come from the documents themselves. This act of prefiguration is a poetic act, it suggests use of terms, concepts and the mode of establishing relationship between them. Four modalities of poetic language have been identified. These are: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony.<sup>12</sup>

In metaphor, phenomena are characterized in terms of similarity or difference with one another. There appears to be an elective affinity between the formist mode of historical narrative with its belief in vivid representation of individual facts and the trope of metaphor, e.g., "Akbar—the great", "Fatehpur Sikri—an oasis of culture", "Churchill, the saviour of the nation". In metonymy, the name of the part or aspect of a thing is substituted for the whole; for example, "The

Pentagon', 'The Kremlin', 'The South Block'.

The trope of synecdoche, conveys an intrinsic, integrative relationship between the elements of a whole. "Gandhis' entire body was made of heart"—suggesting qualities of compassion. Expressions like 'The Reformation', 'The French Revolution', 'Islamic Fundamentalism', are examples of synecdoche.

Irony shows discrepancy between words and their meanings. The intention of an ironic statement is to affirm tacitly the negative of what is stated positively. An example: "Hitler, that protector of the European environment from over population." The question thus is, do historical texts represent the mentalities of that particular period as entities in themselves or as communication to influence the future. To constitute a past by constructing an image of it, that a future is a representation is a construal of the past as an object, not a 'seeing', but a 'seeing as'. Of course one has to represent fact, and not fiction. But this fact is given meaning not merely in the context of past, but also present and future.

The cognitive aspect of history relates to its reading as back to face with objects that the texts is colourless glass window, through which we observe objects. The representation can be shown to be the product of a particular system of meaning. It may be outside the text. The language of the text is the signifier, a set of signs, the meaning signified, but not a neat set of correspondence; no sign can ever be identical with what it stands for, no sign in itself is self-subsistent or fully meaningful; no meaning is ever, in all purity, wholly present in writing: what appears to be absent, other signifiers, other signs are present, but hovering in the atmosphere of signification surrounding the sign used. No linguistic sign is even identical with what it stands for.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the history of South Asia ought to be constructed

taking into account the history of science, philosophy, cultural policy and social institutions within the broad sweep of civilization. Thus, for area studies, integrated history is more relevant and useful. Construction of such a history would mean:

- (1) Deconstruction of colonial-imperial history so that new history can be written: History Decensitized
- (2) De-emphasis on polity so that its negative impact can be minimized: Polity De-emphasized
- (3) Focus on commonality and pluralism within civilization whole: Holism within Pluralism
- (4) Formation of regional pride so that historically-colonially-generated inferiority complex can be eliminated: Regional Pride
- (5) Internally identified problem/issue of development: Inner Directed Identification
- (6) Strengthening regional organizations for solutions of political problems and cultural-human solidarity: Organizational Build-Up
- (7) Formulation of indigenous concepts and theoretical approaches for analysis and understanding of regional reality: Indigenization of Social Sciences

### Cross-Cultural Perspective

The understanding of the concept of culture is significant in the context of cross-cultural perspective. The term 'to accept' has been used variably in different disciplines as well as in common parlance. In the day-to-day conversation, culture is used in the sense of refinement, sophistication and thus tend to be a value-laden term. Historians have used the term, 'civilization and culture' to denote an epoch, or a 'golden age' (Hodgkin) valued items of society in the field of art, architecture, literature, values, ideas and related dimensions leading to a generalised



evaluation.

Anthropologists use the term in a specific sense. Lowie defines culture as "the whole of social tradition." Tylor says that culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Linton equates culture with social heredity. Thus, culture is man-made phenomenon—both material and non-material which society and man acquires and which is capable of being socially transmitted. Culture is non-physiological products of human beings in a society which are shared by a community or a social category or society. In one sense culture is both superindividual and superorganic. It is not natural and it is not individual. Nature is mediated by human beings—for example, wood as converted into chairs become part of culture or stones put in a patterned manner lead to construction of house or a temple or an idol, which are part of culture. Ideas in a book are part of culture so also book, because both are man-made. Distinction has been made between material culture and non-material culture. Fans, TV, house, gold are concrete material items hence, they are part of material culture, while ideas, ideals, values are abstracted formulation which are shared in a society and they are illustrations of non-material culture. Culture thus determines the conditions of our life and living and consequently shapes us.

Sound is natural, words and language are part of culture. The wild growth of plants and trees is part of nature, but when they are systematically planted in a way that garden is built, it is part of culture. Culture is man-made part of environment.

Culture has certain distinctive characteristics:

- (1) *Culture is shared*: A personal idiosyncrasy or a distinctive way of doing, behaving is not culture. Culture necessitates sharedness of use or shared meaning. This

sharedness is not determined by political boundaries. Countries hostile to each other, could and do share culture. Language is part of shared culture between some countries of South Asia, so also are dresses, manners and food habits. Due to western impact, technological advancement and communication, many aspects of life and values are shared between countries of South Asia and western world.

(2) *Culture is learned*: Through the process of socialization values, manners, habits, belief systems etc., are internalized by people. Apart from socialization at individual-personality level, there is sharedness at the level of community, viz., class, which leads to sub-culture of class. (3) *Culture is adaptive*: Culture is influenced by geography, ecology and other physicalities. Society responds to environment in several ways. Our food habits, dress and the house types are significantly determined by environment.

(4) *Culture is mostly integrated*: The elements on traits which make a culture are not just random assortment of customs and values. The diversities in a country like India, necessitate catholicity of perception and need for tolerance. Without such congeniality in adaptation and co-existence, society can not survive.

(5) *Culture is always changing*: Culture keeps on changing from one period of time to another. Such changes could be indigenous or exogenous. Contact, innovation, invention, changing circumstances necessitate and produce change in culture.

The notion of *cultural relativism* suggests that society's customs and ways of life should be understood objectively and in the context of that society's situation, problems and opportunities. The negative evaluation of other culture leads to

*ethnocentrism.*

The commonly shared ways of a group within a society are known as sub-culture. When culture of a category transcends a society, it could be termed as encompassing segmental culture. The culture of poverty is an example of encompassing culture as refers to all poor people of the world. It is a segmental because it talks of one segment of people world over. Composite culture reveals holistic harmony despite variations. It is characterized by flexibility, adaptation and exchange.

Cross-cultural comparative approach is oriented to identification of structures—economic, political, social and cultural—in terms of their:

- (1) *Uniqueness*: The phenomena which are unique and distinct in each locale.
- (2) *Commonalty*: The phenomena which reveal shared commonness of characteristics.
- (3) *Mutuality of impact*: The phenomena which have been influenced and which have influenced other locale.
- (4) *Assimilation*: The phenomena which have merged.
- (5) *Oppositional diversity*: The phenomena which are oppositionally diverse.

The focus in such an approach is not on processual-historical but patterned regularity, restructuration assimilation and unique- characterization. Democracy as a political system in South Asian countries reveals significant variations. The democratic movement in Pakistan was launched by the Indian National Congress prior to 1947. Backed by certain neo-political powers, Pakistan established a military led authoritarian system. There have been close ethnoligual links between people living in different countries. Such linkages reveal cultural commonalty which has been used as an instrument of polity for divisiveness. Tamils in Sri Lanka and people of Bangladesh share same language with some

states of India.<sup>14</sup>

The political lessons of regional civilizational whole are to spread NAM's activities and the functions of SAARC should lead to greater exchange of people from one state to another. Anti-mutual propaganda emerging from outside the countries harm states of the region. The region as a whole has to fight neo-colonialism and Indian Ocean has to be kept free from supermilitary presence.<sup>15</sup>

Cross-cultural studies ought to be inter-disciplinary and policy-oriented. The themes of religion, language, ethnicity, styles of life, popular culture, music, dance, cinema, and plays ought to be studied in depth.

People in the region share innumerable elements of culture, have essentially similar social institutions and values and can be rightfully proud of rich regional heritage. Political boundaries shift, expand and contract. It is culture, social institutions and historical heritage, which have continuity and define socio-cultural space. This space ought to be the focus of area studies. Such a study shall necessitate use of historical documents, representational material of architect, paintings, observational and interview techniques, classical texts and folk literature, reports and newspapers. Obviously scholars can choose their own perspective and tools and construct knowledge which would be free from colonial-imperial cognitive mediation.

2. Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, p. 11.
3. Herbert Blumer, "Social Psychology", in *Man and Society*, (Ed.) E. Schmidt, Prentice Hall, New York, 1937, p. 153.
4. N.K. Singhi, *Recent Trends in Sociological Theory*, unpublished manuscript, p. 278.
5. Herbert Blumer, Sociological Implications of The Thought of George Herbert Mead, in *Sociological Theory*, Walter Wallace, Heinmann, London, pp 234-244.
6. G.C. Pande, "History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture: Reflections on Historiographic Perspective," unpublished paper, p.2.
7. *Ibid.*, p.4.
8. *Ibid.*, p.4.
9. Peter Robb, Texts, "Communities, and the History of Change in Modern South Asia," in *Society and Ideology*, (Ed.) Peter Robb, Oxford, 1993, pp 2-5.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
11. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, 1979, Baltimore, pp. 2-20.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-23.
13. Peter Handy, "Approaches to Pre-Modern Indo-Muslim Historical Writing: Some Reconsiderations in 1990-1991," in *Society and Ideology*, *op.cit.*, pp. 69-71.
14. S.R. Chakravarty, "Indian and Democratic Movements in South Asia", in *India and South Asia*, (Ed.) S.N. Kaushik, Rajan Mahan, Ramkant, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 92-93.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 106.



## Chapter VII

# **WORLD SYSTEM ANALYSIS, POSTMODERNITY AND SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES**

World system analysis has emerged out of discontent with the dominant modes of historical and social science approaches which have focused on specific systems or a society delinked from the global system. World system analysis rejects the perception, and assumption, both of the epistemological issues and of the basic unit of analysis.<sup>1</sup>

The world system approach takes global perspective in the understanding and analysis of events at the level of a society or a region—both at macro and micro level. The theoretical issues in the study, especially of developing nations, have moved forward with the perspective of the dependency theorists, approach of modernization, to the views of world system theorists and postmodernists.

The developmentalist perspective in social sciences focuses on a society as a unit of analysis. The world is said to consist of a number of related but basically autonomous 'societies', which are seen as state-centred entities.<sup>2</sup>





ernization theory. The theoretical objections apart, the methodological issues identified are: (i) The tendency to reify the nation-state as the sole unit of analysis. (ii) The assumptions that all countries follow a similar path of growth. (iii) The method of explanation based on a historical ideal types.<sup>7</sup> Modernization theorists considered nation-states as independent entities. This absolved the nations of core (centre) of their exploitative nature. Migration, multi-nationals, nuclear tests, foreign aid, IMF, World Bank, communicational and technological control, and royalty issues were seen and projected as positive factors and forces for the development of less developed nations. Their invisible hand in influencing the economy, culture, polity, government, and ideology to the detriment of developing nations was never academically perceived as a part of the conspiracy of the power that be.

The degree of inequality was assumed to be due to unequal distribution of natural resources, irrational human resource development of individual states, persistent dogmas of traditional societies, population growth, and other internal limitations and hurdles.

The theoretical challenge to the neo-classical and modernization approaches was based on an alternative perspective wherein the development was viewed holistically within the context of world system. Dependency theorists tried to bring out this point at length. The focus on national societies as the independent unit of analysis has been replaced by an elaboration of the trans-national, international and world context relations which guide the economy, polity and styles of life of developing societies.<sup>8</sup> Recognition of a wider system which affects the nation-states was a perspective which demystified the claims of nations of 'centre' for helping out the process of development in less developed states. The world system revealed the presence of supranational organization which is

unique in its influence and power.

The formation of world system as a powerful system has processual history. The rise of capitalism, free market, communication, technological monopoly, international trade, ideological polarities, power blocks, consumerism, materialistic orientation—all these led to formation of world system.

The process and structure both are significant in the world system approach. This suggests that structures processually are reconstructed and reconstructed. It is necessary to point out that world system identifies two units of power in its analysis: core and periphery. The contemporary world system, thus, operates through power of economy, technology, and ideas and tends to alter the social institutions, ethos, aspirations, ethics, culture and polity of powerless, dependent states. Comparative perspective is replaced by the singular process of inquiry wherein the focus is on 'core' which determines the shape of 'periphery' and thereby indirectly controls it. Space and time need to be incorporated explicitly into the formulation of world systems perspective.

### South Asia in the World System

The South Asia as a region needs to be analyzed in terms of the world systems approach. This approach links the area with the world system not merely in terms of foreign relations, diplomacy and politics, but also economy, communication, technology, consumerism, ideas, ideologies, social institutions at one level and sponsored conflicts between states of South Asia (periphery) by the nations of 'core'. The power of world system has now been concentrated in the 'core' presently. The elimination of Soviet Union as a power and the created another dynamics in the world system.

The developing nations find themselves under the

fluences of several forces which operate at the global level. The problematics of the region have been defined by the nations of 'centre'—be that over-population, poverty, health, education, security, human rights, terrorism, ethnicity, religion, planning or policy. Obviously the solutions also flow from them.

In the context of world systems theory, South Asia consists of states of 'periphery' and its 'centres' are aligned to the 'core' of centre in several ways.

The West as 'core' in the world system has messed-up cultural identities of the South Asia. They do not feel at home or abroad, nor they can opt out of globalization process which is colonizing their cultures. Despots or democrats, fundamentalists or secularists, planners or free marketeers, integrationists or pluralists, they all have to come to terms with it.

In that sense globalization is yet another name for a westernization that cuts deeper. In most indigenous societies, the new phase of westernization means nothing more than ever-increasing dependence on foreign capital, technology, weaponry, and advice, a new craving for imported goodies, among elite group, over-exposure of middle class to TV commercials and easier access for all junk foods for both mind and body. Pressures for westernization in a non-western environment also invite violent reactions. This explains the new urge to go native, look for roots and seek refuge in a hazy past as a cure for diseases of the spirit.

Said has amply demonstrated that never in the human history there has been massive intervention of force and ideas from one centre of dominance to another.<sup>9</sup> Writers like Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul also see their roots from their western conditioning of mind.

Liberation as opposed to reformist nationalism is the



been in the central and primary social institution of family, despite legalistic formulations based on western experience and code of conduct.

The world systems approach in the context of South Asia needs to be seen in the following framework:

1. Integral view of Society: *Holistic Perspective*
2. Processual aspects of interlinkages at the abstract-ideational level and concrete material level: *Linkage Process Perspective*
3. Structural Relationships viewed in terms of 'core' and periphery: *Dominance-Dependence Perspective*
4. Historical view of South Asia as a civilizational category sharing environmental, cultural, social and psychic commonalty: *Civilizational-Cultural Perspective*
5. Contemporary political view of South Asia as states artificially created by colonial powers and politically induced to form self-identity on the basis of state by imperial powers: *Political-Power Perspective*
6. Pluralistic-integration converted into ethnic strife to perpetuate intra-state regional conflict with a view to perpetuate hegemony in multiple areas of operation by the core: *Pluralistic Unity and Ethnic Divisiveness Perspective*
7. Colonial deconstruction of history and induction of collective shame: *Deconstructionist Perspective*
8. Bias, power and academics: South Asia and the academics of West.

*Imperial Formation and Imperial Knowledge:* The imperialists have deployed hegemonic knowledge by defining orientation, framework and paradigm of orientalist discourse wherein South Asian Studies are integrated in that paradigm.

It is the above delineation which ought to be one of the

perspectives to understand the reality of the overt and covert world system. Thus, South Asian Studies are linked with wider global reality. Isolationist approach makes regional studies narrow, myopic and cognitively sterile.

### Postmodernity

Postmodernity is a controversial term which evokes diverse reactions. Despite this, the term has been discussed as an issue and as a theory in anthropology, sociology, economics, literature, art, philosophy, to mention only a few areas.<sup>11</sup> Neo-conservative social analysis, critical theorists, classical and neo-classical Marxists, and feminists have made a common cause in criticizing the very idea of postmodernity. However, an equal number of analysts have embraced the term.<sup>12</sup>

Although the philosophical roots of postmodernism may be traced to the late nineteenth century, the term itself began to be used from the 1930s. However, it was mid-1970s when the term began to get currency.<sup>13</sup> From early 1980s, the modernism-postmodernism constellation in the arts and the modernity-postmodernity constellation in social theory had become one of the most contested terrains in the intellectual life.<sup>14</sup>

For some, postmodernity signifies a geopolitical relocation of the creative, innovative momentum associated with modernity beyond the West. It means a loss of mastery with its origin in the premature end of the American century, the transfer of power away from America and its cosy satellites toward new centres.<sup>15</sup>

It is necessary to note that in the twentieth century, social science underwent a process of institutionalization and cultural legitimization. The role of social theory as a method, a course to adjudicate disciplinary disputes has expanded. The

theorists are expected to take positions on the relation between concepts and the social world, the logical structure of sociological explanation, the nature of social action, order and change, the linkage between agency and social structure or micro and macro levels of analysis.<sup>16</sup> In its role as a grounding discourse social theory has become increasingly meta-theoretical.

The efforts to reconfigure social inquiry into a purely analytical mode, purging it of practical, moral and political intent, has reinforced a public perception of the obscurity and irrelevance of social science. Postmodernism is a response to the contradicting pull of social science towards aimless empiricism and an equally aimless theoreticism. In certain sense it provides a framework of alternative society, a new way of analysis and a movement of intellectual revitalization.<sup>17</sup>

1. Postmodernism criticizes the modernist notion that science itself, is the privileged form of reason or medium of truth. Postmodernism underlines the practical and moral meaning of science.
2. Postmodernism is critical of the claim that scientific knowledge is universal and can be justified in a non-contextual manner. It believes that standards of truth are context-dependent.
3. Contemporary theories are part of socially effective cultural traditions. The western cultural tradition has dominated the cognitive framework.
4. It focuses on radical decentering of science. Social scientific knowledge bears the imprint not only of the broad civilizational and national culture of which it is a part but typically of the more specific class, race, gender, or sexual orientation of its producers. Through deconstruction, the particular standpoint and interests of the author can be revealed.





postmodernism became a general theory of culture, including popular culture.

One of the significant concepts in postmodernity is 'difference'. The other is 'irony'. Irony is a literary trope that deals in reversal and negation.<sup>21</sup> Postmodernism is an ironic general theory. It suggests:

1. Reality is discussible—not much more than this.
2. Language is primary.
3. Reality is figurative—available only within language. World is composed of differences, not essences. It is fundamentally decentred. When ethnographers delink themselves from their perspective and write from the point of view of the other, the social world is itself transformed scientifically and politically.

Postmodernism does not assert historical discontinuity. Derridean deconstructive style has the central idea which suggests that the old and new are in some unusual non-linear relationship to each other—such that the very idea of old and new is altered. Deconstruction is a play against and within the language one has to use. The centre is deconstructed but it has to be done through language. Language for this is the same, which has been used before deconstruction. The past has to be reworked in the present.

With Saussure, difference was the notion that allowed him to sever linguistic signs from any direct relationship with the social world. Language has meaning due to the shared meaning given and accepted by the linguistic community. The word 'woman' bears no linguistic relationship to any object in the real world. The meaning is entirely on social contract amongst competent speakers of a language.

We have accepted historicized or social constructionist interpretations of words like gender and racial discrimination. They are product of social process. Written words are more



Dworkin, Susan Griffin, Mary Daly, Kate Millet suggest a non-scientific mode of social analysis that frequently combines autobiographical, literary, social-scientific, and journalistic styles. They provide a different language of social criticism as well as the cultural building blocks.

Foundationalism ought to be rejected in social sciences. It promotes intellectual obscurity and social irrelevance of theory, contributes to the decline of public moral and political discourse, and further the enfeeblement of average citizen. Such an epistemic suspicion is the core of postmodernity.<sup>22</sup>

One way is to abandon all efforts to develop general theories as structural-functional, and historical-materialism. General theories are culture-bound or ethnocentric because of their socio-historical embeddedness. General theories promote essentializing, reified identities, legitimate social hierarchies, repress social differences and particularities and ignore the interest of marginalized population. They contribute to the de-politicization of the public spheres by trying to transfigure moral and practical struggles into analytical or meta-theoretical struggles.<sup>23</sup>

Genealogies aim to uncover the social processes concealed by hegemonic essentialist discourses. They account for the social production of identities and institutional orders that frequently are assumed to be natural. Use of more local narratives would analyze a circumscribed social or political phenomenon in a densely contextual way. This entails analyzing an event—Hazratbal in Kashmir, homelessness, street children, illiteracy, AIDS, in its particular social or political setting, a particular city, particular time, specific country, while attending to its heterogeneous meanings for different populations. This would help in providing public voice to disempowered people. It does not mean that there is a total disregard for generalizing framework. But it would focus on a



point of female oppression. Even the domestic/public category is problematic. Even when women were or are entering public domain the oppression continues. Entry into public has led to newer forms of and of greater intensity and diversities of exploitation and oppression. Even sexualization of their body and identity is the result of their entry into public field.

Discursive analysis of society reveals that the social science itself is a discursive practice. The metaphor of society as discourse also suggests that social structures can be understood as structures of language and that these structures are invented through acts of speech. The intentionality of a person is endangered by the language which is given.

The metaphor of society as a discourse has certain logical and moral political advantages over organistic and mechanistic ways of thinking. The social side of language is outside the individual. Language exists as a shared phenomenon of meanings. The dichotomy of structure and individual is mediated by discourse. The structure, envisioned by language, is both a constraint and a resource for enactments, processually expressed by speech or writing. The semiotic moment of the language metaphor deals with structure; its hermeneutic moments deal with meaning and action.<sup>24</sup> The discursive approach is reflective. It sees the social sciences as providing *logoi* by which members generate their own texts.<sup>25</sup> It sees social science as value-soaked civic talk about our common life. The discursive approach recovers the ancient function of social thought as a moral and political practice.

Search for unified single theory in the social sciences is misguided. Thus, the postmodernist thought considers ultimate philosophical foundation of knowledge as an impossible quest and as an intellectual imperialism which does violence to the multivocality of intellectual discourse. Post-

modernist believes in the decentred notion of power. Power is normalized, rendered into discipline, practised routinely by the subject upon themselves. It induces pleasure, forms knowledge, and produces discourse.

Postmodernism thus has more than one meanings. It is reaction to contemporary western-industrial-modern way of life and outlook. The first industrial revolution devalued muscle work, the second devalued routine mental work, and the third devalued human thinking. The growth-oriented industries have disturbed the balance of life. The damage inflicted on the environment through faulty technology has created widespread problems. The forms of radical monopoly have displaced autonomous, self or personal provision of use-values and satisfactions through standardized industrial forms of production. The process of over-programming has transformed the autonomous act of learning into a controlled busyness of learning, through which people are constantly taught, socialized, normalized, tested and reformed. The power and inequality have become polarized in the new structure of modernity leading to modernization of poverty. Cities and slums, destitution and hunger, epidemic and disease are the outcomes of new international economic imperialism. The past has been decried and devalued and there is engineered obsolescence for the whatever present. Growing dimension of specialization and professionalization have led to a situation where by specialists decide what we need and do not need thereby creating confusion regarding our liberte, and right, (which).

The globalization process has led to emergence of multinational, anonymous bureaucracies, technist paradigm of progress, geo-political form of nation creating artificial engineered boundary disputes, rising level of crime, increased drug use, stress prone conditions, international debt, war and terror.

resources, damage to environment, low level of participation in democratic processes, seduction to consumerism, exploitation of raw material from developing nations, stimulation of private interest to the detriment of public and community interests, impersonal, individualistic and contractual relationship (Touraine)

Thus, there has been erosion of (i) a sense of common valued past, (ii) projection of superiority of western civilization, (iii) desirability of the goal of economic growth, (iv) faith in scientific reason, and (v) intrinsic value of secular—this world as primary focus of orientation.

The common man has been marginalized. The specialists have created knowledge based on ignorance. Where everything has been staked out as somebody's specialized field of knowledge, what is the thinking of ordinary people worth? Precisely zero. For what do they know about anything that some expert do not know better. They are expert on their sex life, their dreams, their relations with their children, their voting habits, their morals and manners, their tastes and their needs (Roszak).

The development in science and technology has meant changes in spheres of production. Bill has identified five main changes arising out of this: (i) relative shift of emphasis from goods production to service provision in the economic sector; (ii) increase in health, education, research and development, and government agencies in particular; (iii) growth in number and influence of a professional and technical class; (iv) primacy of theoretical knowledge as a resource for innovation and policy; and (v) control of technology and technology assessment.

As a reaction to the modernism and consequences of modernization, postmodernity focuses on a paradigm of alternative, which would further focus on feelings i ce

rationality, co-operation instead of competition, holism instead of specialization, and communality in place of individualism.

Postmodernity, as a theory, is concerned with the following coherent and interrelated theses:

- (a) A thesis of cultural change: Modernization is a process of cultural differentiation, while postmodernization is a process of cultural de-differentiation.
- (b) Modernism is a discursive cultural formation, while postmodernism is a 'figural' cultural formation.

The regime of signification reveals that cultural objects are important. It gives importance to market and not only the point of production. The cultural economy signifies the specific relations of productions of cultural objects: the specific conditions of reception, a particular institutional framework that mediates between production and reception, and a particular way in which cultural objects circulate.

The mode of signification implies that cultural object depends upon a particular relationship between signifier, signified and referent. The signifier is a sound image, word or statement. The signified is the concept or meaning. The referent is an object in the real world.

The concepts of narrative, representation, deconstruction, de-differentiation, and power have been used by postmodernist thinkers. Postmodernism is not bound to any discipline or to social sciences as such. It has been used in different areas of knowledge. Its meaning is also not specific and singular. However, its impact is being felt largely because of the type of issues it has raised and innovative perspective. It has been able to built, questioning the dominant assumptions in social sciences.

Thus, postmodernism would signify the need and the significance of contextual, narrative, linguistic dimensions in



study of the reality of South Asia. The moral and ethical aspects become important in postmodernism, hence South Asia can be placed in the context of contemporary global scenario. The invisible aspects of imperial power, its hegemony and exploitation can be constructed as issues for debate which have implication for humanity at large.

As a reaction to contemporary western-industrial-modern way of life, it would inculcate confidence amongst the nations of South Asia to take pride in their heritage. It could be a unifying force, demystifying mechanism and moralizing influence.

### Notes

1. T.K. Hopkins, I. Wallerstein *et al.*, *World Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology*, Volume I, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1982, p.7.
2. *Ibid.*, p.41.
3. *Ibid.*, p.42.
4. *Ibid.*, p.51.
5. Immanuel Wallerstein, "World System Analysis: Theoretical and Interpretive Issues", in *World System Analysis, op. cit.*, p.91.
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7. T. Skocpol, "Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique" *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXII, March 1977, pp. 1075-89.
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## Chapter VIII

### FEMINIST THEORY

Feminist theory as a distinct approach to comprehend the reality of woman's existence as well as an ideology to transform her placement in the society is of recent origin. A large number of studies which have emerged in the last few decades reveal profound intellectual maturity, intense sensitivity and consensual programmatic formulations in the area of gender issues. The feminist theory is of great significance for the analysis of South Asia in the context of status of women, social institutions like marriage, family and inheritance, religion, social practices, development, economy, employment, gender discrimination, health, education and styles of life.

The gender theme necessitates analytical distinction between femaleness, femininity and feminism. The femaleness is the physical and biological distinction between man and woman. Such a distinction is chromosomically determined in womb and in the process of physical growth, the potential distinctions are visibly manifested. The reproductive organs are basically different at birth. As the physical development



one comes of age. Although the genital morphology of man and woman is based on reciprocity for sexual gratification and procreation, nevertheless this complementarity is characterized by inverse reciprocity of female wherein she is more of recipient and dependent than an exchange based on equality. This makes her vulnerable to sexual assault by man and not vice-versa.

Pregnancy is a unique biological condition of woman. Man has manipulated the biological differentiations into structured inequality and subordinated social status of woman.

### **Gender-Status-Universal**

There is universality of transforming the biological differences into concrete empirical cultural construct of woman. Irrespective of temporal and spatial variations, woman has been socially and culturally subordinated to man in all societies throughout civilizational history. Patriarchy has been the dominant institutionalized mode of her subordination whereby she is made to change identity, residence and is deprived of property. Her dominant identity has been sexualized and her major role has been converted into domestication within home, leading to denial of public participation and access to power.

### **Gender-Status-Stratum-Specific**

All societies tend to be stratified at the level of empirical reality. The universality of hierarchy can be seen in terms of similarity of generalized status of a category of people based on societal values. This has created structured inequality based on class/caste. Exploitation, deprivation and unequal opportunity structure have been the resultant consequences of social stratification due to manipulation of resources and

gains based not on fair rewards but overt and covert ability to beat the system by vested interest groups.

The status-stratum-specific reveals the gender inequality which is intra-stratum. Woman within the same class position has been subordinated to man. Thus, woman experiences subordination as a gender category at the level of generalized universality, while within a particular class she is further subordinated vis-a-vis man. The women in lower stratum of society experience triple sources of oppression in South Asian countries. They are oppressed through market capitalism, their employers discriminate through unequal wages, denial of promotion and typification of jobs; secondly the code of caste hierarchy makes their status further low; and thirdly they are exposed to sexism of male not merely visual or imaginatively projected but in person and reality.

### Gender-Status-Specific

In South Asian countries, the socially constructed meanings assigned to widowhood, divorce, and prostitute reveal the specificity of gender stigma. The institutions of *purdah*, child marriage, female infanticide, dowry, *sati*, polygamy, and concubine have historically dominated the world-view of women and have culturally enslaved them to distinct harassment and denial of normalcy of life as available to men.

It is significant to note that there is no stigma attached to man who goes to prostitute, not to the man who is widower, nor to the man who impregnates unmarried woman and begets a child. Thus, several cultural stigmas are associated with woman.

The feminist theory can be viewed from diverse perspectives, which are discussed as under:

### 1. *Oppositional Epistemic Orientation*

From this perspective, the feminist theory is viewed as a self-conscious reaction to overwhelmingly masculinity of privileged and historically dominant knowledge.

This perspective identifies the forces and factors which have led to masculinity of knowledge.

The conceptual articulation and the theoretical formulation in different disciplines have led to inbuilt male bias in the epistemological process of analysis and ontological process of definition of social reality itself. The conventional theories of stratification are essentially class-based as they examine status in terms which are dominantly related to male status. History has neglected women, as it has always been the history of men. Interestingly, male biases determine not only what is written but also how it is interpreted. The economists only deal with cash-nexus world. This permits them to exclude enormous contribution which house wives make, because their work is not monetized. In political science, from thinkers like Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau to even Adam Smith, one gets a picture of society as constituted entirely by men.

The topics that have preoccupied sociologists in terms of their contents fall in men's realm: power, work, climbing the ladder, conflict and sex but not women. Woman, intellectually, has been a chapter in textbooks or some footnotes here and there. She has been taken as a 'beside the point', or thrown in as an extra rather than as an intrinsic component of a total society.

The dominant theories in social sciences have systematically neglected the composite formulation of taking both man and woman. Functionalism by implications justifies status-quo, therefore, also gender status-quo. Research findings reveal that females at their own make much more adjustments than male, thus making a social s and





### 3. *Reflexive Orientation*

The reflexive orientation is concerned with issues related to dichotomy between verbalized statements and views and personal action. The gap between ideal and actual increases in accordance with the lag between stated goals and actual achievement. The institutionalized hypocrisy of contemporary society which has influenced all categories people and professions necessitates that one should see the theory through theorist. Ideal verbalization and pseudo-awareness of the equality need to be seen in the context of what one actually says, does and what one actually is.

### 4. *Cognivistic-Interpretive*

The cognivistic-interpretive feministic theory provides a framework based on gender (female) as the ideological theoretical scheme for the analysis of society in general. Like class analysis, gender analysis can provide understanding of generality of social structure from the gender perspective. Since woman is a universal category as it cuts across class, race, age, nationality, the entirety of society both at macro and micro levels can be understood through woman-gender perspective.

There are basically two types of versions in the feminist theory:

- (a) Feminism of equality
- (b) Feminism of difference

The *feminism of equality* focuses on equality between sexes and regards both human species capable of achieving goals which the other can obtain. Previously occupied positions by women can be occupied by men also. Betty Friedan, Kate Millet, Firestone, and Green were votaries of egalitarianism, against typification of role and domestication of women. They sought equality based on justice and equal

employment. The inequality is the result of patriarchal system which has domesticated, enslaved and sexualized women. Patriarchy has inbuilt power of discrimination, inequality and typification of roles.

Therefore, the social roles need to be restructured and the power of patriarchy should be so redesigned that women are equally empowered.

There was a time when a girl would comb her hair, cook and prepare food, wash clothes, and clean floor. One day she came out with a book by Betty Friedan—*Feminine Mystique*. She looked bold and assertive. She took up career and in many fields, was doing as good as man, despite structured inequality based on sex. Men got worried and through multi-nationals new female sin was created—A woman should look beautiful. From domesticity, she was enslaved to one more master—career. Now she has three shift duties—home, work, and beauty. The multi-nationals catered to self-hating mechanisms for selling their cosmetic products and weight reduction methods. There is \$133 billion dietary industry, \$20 million cosmetic industry and \$300 million cosmetic surgery. Dieting is the most potent political sedative in women's history. Definitions of beauty are constantly raised in light of technological peeling of faces, breast implants and other prosthetic surgeries have become common.

Thus, the competitive potential of women has been systematically diverted to areas which are non-creative.

The *feminism of difference* emphasises differences between man and woman on the basis of essential differences. Sexism is determined on the basis of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and (iii) universalism.

In biology, woman's essence is determined on the basis of biological capacities. This is some form of essentialism. It is considered as the bedrock of ideology. The essentialist

feministic essentiality is traced on ontological or theological grounds. In universalism, the essence of woman is constructed through universality of certain traits which are obtained and exist in all cultures.

The feminism of difference constructs identity through difference and is oriented to attainment of autonomy. Thus, it is different in itself. It focuses on the principle of right to reject terms on which equality is measured.

The notion of difference resists the homogenization of separate political struggles based on sex, race, class, and caste. It believes in right to define oneself and others, and the world according to one's interests. The objection to egalitarianism is based on the fact that the criteria of equality take male achievements, values, and standards as the norms to which women should also aspire. Struggles for equality between the sexes are reduced to struggles around a more generalized and neutralized social justice. Equality at reproductive relations seems impossible.

Therefore, until the structure of shared meanings is problematized, equality in anything but a formal sense remains impossible.

### Man in Feminism

The entry of man in feminism and feministic theory has been interpreted in many ways:

- (a) He might be in feminism conceptually, theoretically i.e., for intellectual reasons: *Objective-Cognitive*
- (b) He might be in feminism as he endorses political position of feminism: *Ideological-Identity*
- (c) He could enter feminism in the same way as lover or seducer might enter the femaleness. *Problematic-Erotic*

Feminism is a disursive formation which develops a comprehensive critique of culture; it becomes limiting and partial



1. Violence
  - (i) Rape and sexual harassment:
    - (a) Public place
    - (b) Institutions—schools, colleges
    - (c) Institutions—work place
    - (d) Family—incest
2. Dowry.
3. Prostitution in its different forms.
4. Sex stereotyping through media (TV, films, textbooks, newspapers, journals).
5. Witch-hunting.
6. The practices of concubine, mistress, officer-wife, *nagar vadhu*, singer-dancer.
7. The stigmatized women—divorcee, widow, spinster, childless woman.

It is necessary to analyze the development model related to women's development in the context of indigenous social reality. The education, employment, family planning, and health have been given importance in the programmes initiated by the governments.

The South Asian women reveal shared experience of distinctive type. The feminist theory, feminism and programmatic changes ought to take into consideration the local conditions, the composite culture with its heterogeneous diversities and historicity—both in its classical and folkforms.

### Notes

1. N.K. Singhi, "Feminist Theory", in *Recent Trends in Sociological Theory*, unpublished, p. 293

2. Jessie, Bernand, "My Four Revolutions: An Autobiographical History of the ASA", in Joan Huber, *Changing Women in a Changing Society*, University of Chicago Press, 1973, Chicago, p. 32.

## Chapter IX

### **SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES: A PARADIGMATIC CONSTRUCT**

A paradigm construct for the study and research on South Asia necessitates identification of basic issues and possible range of answers. The first question is definitional: What constitutes South Asia?

1. *Spatial-Geographical*: The definition of South Asia is not merely a matter of scope and coverage. The spatial-geographical sense brings in the commonalty of nature and its ramifications. The political notion of territory is grafted on geographical notion of land of inclusion and exclusion.
2. *Politico-Governmental*: This notion divides the region into different countries. At one level (external), the region is perceived holistically from politically vantage point by powerful nations and at other level (internal) different countries of the region form formal organizations for co-operation (SAARC) and/or develop relationships of hostility and





colonialism. The need to reconstruct misplaced emphasis, interest oriented definitions and inappropriate conceptual categories and theoretical formulations given by western scholars should be critically examined prior to their adaptation. Cognitive enterprise is theoretically universalistic but needs constant re-examination, reformulation and ought to be free from politics of power. Ideally, it aims at discovery of truth and not hegemony, and it is based on rational construction and logical clarity and not on dogmatic superstition or vested interests. It may sound idealistic but knowledge ought to be the prime area of idealism as empirical realities are full of pragmatism.

The second question relates to the approaches, orientations, perspectives and theoretical formulations in studying South Asia.

1. The structural-orientation approach attempts to identify the relationship between different parts leading to formation of pattern, through processual repetitiveness of relational activities. The system approach takes into account the dynamics of the structure.
2. The processual-subjective approaches like ethnomethodology, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism are concerned with the interactional dimensions, interpretive instead of normative, motivational-experiential in place of objective-observable and consider structure to be constantly in flux. Socio-political reality is not perceived as something out there, but emerges in the process of negotiated encounters between agencies and individuals.
3. The world system analysis focuses not on specific or abstract society but talks of a definite world where different elements influence, mutually or singly. The present world system has created nations of 'centre' and



Studies to formulate its cognitive course and action plan.

*Note*

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